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the Observatory

BY THE EDITOR

• The other night a group in which I was fortunately (?) included, got to talking about the dimension of time. One character observed that time is a dimension applicable solely to the visible universe and that the invisible All which obviously functions, is not bound by it. There were no arguments.

Then another opinion was voiced—that time is nothing more than a race suggestion, a pattern springing from all the subconscious thought of the ages.

Plenty of argument bounced against that one and then a rather interesting question was put forth—one I think you'll enjoy mulling over.

Suppose a jet plane with an unlimited supply of fuel was launched to an altitude of, say ten miles above the earth; that its speed was set at the exact rotating speed of the earth so that the sun always remained directly overhead. The plane (which is actually standing still) carries one passenger—an infant for which robot facilities are provided. The babe's only knowledge of time is subconscious, and now the question—

Would the infant age? So far as it is concerned, the time would always be high-noon. There would be no night-day, living-routine pattern of time as we know it.

Majority opinion maintained that the aging process would take hold regardless, but with some rather interesting variations. Life processes, it appeared, would form the new time pattern, and one deep thinker observed that the infant's hair would continue to grow. Therefore, he could keep a record of his age in this manner. In time he could say: *I am one hundred haircuts old.*

But suppose, later in life, our experimental man lost his hair—became completely bald? That seemed to leave only one possibility—he would be in for a long, long afternoon.—PWF



Their combined thought-force hit him



THE PENAL CLUSTER

By IVAR JORGENSEN

Tomorrow's technocracy will produce more and more things for better living. It will produce other things, also; among them, criminals too despicable to live on this earth. Too abominable to breathe our free air.



like a thunderbolt.

THE clipped British voice said, in David Houston's ear, *I'm quite sure he's one. He's cashing a check for a thousand pounds. Keep him under surveillance.*

Houston didn't look up immediately. He simply stood there in the lobby of the big London bank, filling out a deposit slip at one of the long, high desks. When he had finished, he picked up the slip and headed towards the teller's cage.

Ahead of him, standing at the window, was a tall, impeccably dressed, aristocratic-looking man with graying hair.

"The man in the tweeds?" Houston whispered. His voice was so low that it was inaudible a foot away, and his lips scarcely moved. But the sensitive microphone in his collar picked up the voice and relayed it to the man behind the teller's wicket.

That's him, said the tiny speaker hidden in Houston's ear. The fine-looking chap in the tweeds and bowler.

"Got him," whispered Houston.

He didn't go anywhere near the man in the bowler and tweeds; instead, he went to a window several feet away.

"Deposit," he said, handing the slip to the man on the other side of the partition. While the teller went through the motions of putting the deposit through the robot accounting machine, David Houston kept his ears open.

"How did you want the thousand, sir?" asked the teller in the next wicket.

"Ten pound notes, if you please," said the graying man. "I think a hundred notes will go into my brief case easily enough." He chuckled, as though he'd made a clever witicism.

"Yes, sir," said the clerk, smiling.

Houston whispered into his microphone again. "Who is the guy?"

On the other side of the partition, George Meredith, a small, unimposing looking man, sat at a desk marked: MR. M E R E D I T H — ACCOUNTING DEPT. He looked as though he were paying no attention whatever to anything going on at the various windows, but he, too, had a microphone at his throat and a hidden pickup in his ear.

At Houston's question, he whispered: "That's Sir Lewis Huntley. The check's good, of course. Poor fellow."

"Yeah," whispered Houston, "if he is what we think he is."

"I'm fairly certain," Meredith replied. "Sir Lewis isn't the type of fellow to draw that much in cash. At the present rate of exchange, that's worth three thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars American. Sir Lewis might carry a hundred pounds as pocket-money, but never a thousand."

Houston and Meredith were a good thirty feet from each other, and neither looked at the other. Unless a bystander had equipment to tune in on the special scrambled wavelength they were using, that bystander would never know

they were holding a conversation.

"... nine-fifty, nine-sixty, nine - seventy, nine - eighty, nine-ninety, a thousand pounds," said the clerk who was taking care of Sir Lewis' check. "Would you count that to make sure, sir."

"Certainly. Ten, twenty, thirty, . . ."

While the baronet was double-checking the amount, David Houston glanced at him. Sir Lewis looked perfectly calm and unhurried, as though he were doing something perfectly legal—which, in a way, he was. And, in another way, he most definitely was not, if George Meredith's suspicions were correct.

"Your receipt, sir." It was the teller at Houston's own window.

Houston took the receipt, thanked the teller, and walked toward the broad front doors of the bank.

"George," he whispered into the throat mike, "has Sir Lewis noticed me?"

"Hasn't so much as looked at you," Meredith answered. "Good hunting."

"Thanks."

As Houston stepped outside the bank, he casually dropped one hand into a coat pocket and turned a small knob on

his radio control box. "Houston to HQ," he whispered.

"London HQ; what is it, Houston?" asked the earpiece.

"Leadenhall Street Post. Meredith thinks he's spotted one. Sir Lewis Huntley."

"Righto. We've got men in that part of the city now. We'll have a network posted within five minutes. Can you hold onto him that long?"

Houston looked around. Leadenhall Street was full of people, and the visibility was low. "I'll have to tail him pretty closely," Houston said. "Your damned English fogs don't give a man much chance to see anything."

There was a chuckle from the earphone. "Cheer up, Yank; you should have seen it back before 1968. When atomic power replaced coal and oil, our fogs became a devil of a lot cleaner."

The voice was quite clear; at the London headquarters of the UN Psychodeviant Police, there was no need to wear a throat mike, which had a tendency to make the voice sound muffled in spite of the Statistical Information - Bit Samplers which were supposed to clarify the speech coming through them.

"What do you know about 1968?" Houston asked sardon-

ically. "Your mother was still pushing you around in a baby-carriage then."

"In a pram," corrected the Headquarters operator. "That is true, but my dear Aunt Jennifer told me all about it. She was—"

"The hell with your Aunt Jennifer," Houston interrupted suddenly. "Here comes Sir Lewis. Get me cover—fast!"

"Right. Keep us posted."

Sir Lewis Huntley stepped out of the broad door of the bank and turned left. He took a couple of steps and stopped. He didn't look around; he simply took a cigarette out of a silver case, put it in his mouth, and lit it. The glow of the lighter shone yellowly on the brass plate near the door which said: *An Affiliate of Westminster Bank, Ltd.*

Sir Lewis snapped the light out, drew on the cigarette, and strode on down the street, swinging a blue plastex brief case which contained a thousand pounds in United Nations Bank of England notes.

Houston decided the baronet had not been looking for a tail; he wished he could probe the man's mind to make sure, but he knew that would be fatal. He'd have to play the game and hope for the best.

"He's heading east," Houston whispered. "Doesn't look

as if he's going to get a cab."

"Check," said the earphone.

Sir Lewis seemed in no great hurry, but he walked briskly, as though he had a definite destination in mind.

After a little way, he crossed to the south side of Leadenhall Street and kept going east. Houston stayed far enough behind to be above suspicion, but not so far that he ran a chance of losing his man.

"He's turning south on Fenchurch," Houston said a little later. "I wonder where he's going."

"Keep after him," said Headquarters. "Our net men haven't spotted either of you yet. They can hardly see across the street in this damned fog."

Houston kept going.

"What the hell?" he whispered a few minutes later. "He's still following Fenchurch Street! He's doubling back!"

Leadenhall Street, the banking center of the City of London, runs almost due east-and-west; Fenchurch Street makes a forty-five degree angle with it at the western end, running southwest for a bit and then curving toward the west, toward Lombard.

"Houston," said HQ, "touch your left ear."

Houston obediently reached up and scratched his left ear.

"Okay," said HQ. "Bogart's spotted you, but he hasn't spotted Sir Lewis. Bogart's across the street."

"He can't miss Sir Lewis," whispered Houston. "Conservatively dressed — matching coat and trousers of orange nylon tweed—Royal blue half-brim bowler—carrying a blue brief case."

There was a pause, then: "Yeah. Bogart's spotted him, and so has MacGruder. Mac's on your side, a few yards ahead."

"Check. How about the rest of the net?"

"Coming, coming. Be patient, old man."

"I am patient," growled Houston. *I have to be*, he thought to himself, otherwise I'd never stay alive.

"We've got him bracketed now," HQ said. "If we lose him now, he's a magician."

Sir Lewis walked on, seemingly oblivious to the group of men who had surrounded him. He came to the end of Fenchurch Street and looked to his left, towards London Bridge. Then he glanced to his right.

"I think he's looking for a cab," Houston whispered.

"That's what MacGruder says," came the reply. "We've

got Arthmore in a cab behind you; he'll pick you up. MacGruder will get another cab, and we have a private car for Bogart."

Sir Lewis flagged a cab, climbed in, and gave an address to the driver. Houston didn't hear it, but MacGruder, a heavy-set, short, balding man, was standing near enough to get the instructions Sir Lewis had given to the driver.

A cab pulled up to the curb near Houston, and he got in.

Arthmore, the driver, was a thin, tall, hawk-nosed individual who could have played Sherlock Holmes on TV. Once he got into character for a part, he never got out of it unless absolutely necessary. Right now, he was a Cockney cab-driver, and he would play the part to the hilt.

"Where to, guv'nor?" he asked innocently.

"Buckingham Palace," said Houston. "I've got a poker appointment with Prince Charles."

"Blimey, guv'nor," said Arthmore, "You are movin' in 'igh circles! 'Ow's 'Er Majesty these days?"

The turboelectric motor hummed, and the cab shot off into traffic. "According to the report I get on the blinkin'

wireless," he continued, "a chap named MacGruder claims that the eminent Sir Lewis 'Untley is 'eaded for Number 37 Upper Berkeley Mews."

"One of these days," said Houston, "all those *H's* you drop is going to bounce back and hit you in the face."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Yewston?" Arthmore asked blankly.

Houston grinned. "Nothing, cabbie; it's just that you remind me of a cultured, intelligent fellow named Jack Arthmore. The only difference is that Jack speaks the Queen's English."

"Crikey!" said Arthmore. "Wot a coincidence!" He paused, then: "The Queen's English, you say? She 'as to be, don't she?"

"Shut up," said Houston conversationally. "And give me a cigarette," he added.

"There's a package of Players in my shirt pocket," Arthmore said, keeping his hands on the wheel.

Houston fished out a cigarette, lit it, and returned the pack.

Apropos of nothing, Arthmore said: "Reminds me of the time I was workin' for a printer, see? We 'ad to print up a bunch of 'andbills adver-

tisin' a church charity bazaar. Down at the bottom was supposed to be printed 'Under the auspices of St. Bede's-on-Thames.' So I—"

He went on with a long, rambling tale about making a mistake in printing the handbill. Houston paid little attention. He smoked in silence, keeping his eyes on the red glow of the taillight ahead of them.

Neither man mentioned the approaching climax of the chase. Even hardened veterans of the Psychodeviant Police don't look forward to the possibility of having their minds taken over, controlled by some outside force.

It had never happened to Houston, but he knew that Arthmore had been through the experience once. It evidently wasn't pleasant.

"—and the boss was 'oppin' mad," Arthmore was saying, "but, crikey, 'ow was I to know that *auspice* was spelled A-U-S-P-I-C-E?"

Houston grinned. "Yeah, sure. How're we doing with Sir Lewis?"

"Seems to be headed in the right direction," Arthmore said, suddenly dropping the Cockney accent. "This is the route I'd take if I were headed for Upper Berkeley Mews. He probably hasn't told the

driver to change addresses—maybe he won't."

"The victims never do," Houston said. "He probably is actually headed toward Number 37 Upper Berkeley Mews."

"Yeah. Nobody's perfect," said Arthmore.

Forty-five minutes of steady progress through the streets of Greater London brought Sir Lewis Huntley to Upper Berkeley and to the short dead-end street which constituted the Mews. By the time the dapper baronet stepped out of the machine and paid his driver, the whole area was surrounded by and filled with the well-armed, silent, and careful agents of the Psycho-deviant Police.

Number 37 was an old concrete-and-steel structure of the George VI period, faced with a veneer of red brick. It had obviously been remodeled at least once to make the façade more modern and more fashionable; the red-violet anodized aluminum was relatively fresh and unstained. It wouldn't have taken vast wealth to rent a flat in the building, but neither would an average income have been quite enough.

Houston looked out of the window of Arthmore's cab

and glanced at the tiers of windows in the building. Presumably, the man they were looking for was up there—somewhere.

So you occupy a station in the upper middle-class, thought Houston. It checked. Every bit of evidence that came his way seemed to check perfectly and fit neatly into the hypothesis which he had formed. Soon it would be time to test that theory—but the time had not yet come.

"Stand by and wait for orders, Houston," said the speaker in Houston's ear. "We've got men inside the building."

Sir Lewis Huntley opened the sparkling, translucent door of Number 37 Upper Berkeley Mews and went inside.

Arthmore pulled the cab over to the curb a few yards from the entrance and the two men waited in silence. All around them were other men, some in private cars, some walking slowly along the street. All of them were part of the net that had gathered to catch one man.

Poor fish, Houston thought wryly.

There was no noise, no excitement. Five minutes after Sir Lewis had entered the front door, it opened again. A

man whom Houston had never seen before stepped out and gestured with one hand. At the same time, Houston's speaker said: "They've got him. Hit him with a stun gun when he tried to get out through the fire exit."

An ambulance which had been waiting at the entrance of the Mews pulled up in front of Number 37, and a minute or so later a little clot of men came out bearing a stretcher, which was loaded into the ambulance. Immediately after them came another man who had a firm, but polite grip on the arm of Sir Lewis Huntley.

Houston sighed and leaned back in his seat. That was that. It was all over. Simple. Nothing to it.

Another Controller had been apprehended by the Psychodeviant Police. Another deviant, already tried and found guilty, was ready to be exiled from Earth and imprisoned on one of the Penal Asteroids. All in the day's work.

There's just one thing I'd like to know, Houston thought blackly. What in the hell's going on?

In his hotel room near Picadilly Circus, several hours later, David Houston sat alone, drink in hand, and put

that same question to himself again.

"What's going on?"

On the face of it, it was simple. On the face of it, the answer was right in front of him, printed in black and white on the front page of the evening *Times*.

Houston lifted the paper off the bed and looked at it. The banner line said: *Controller Captured in Lambeth!*

Beneath that, in smaller type, the headline added: Robert Harris Accused of Taking Control of Barrister Sir Lewis Huntley.

The column itself told the whole story. Mr. Robert Harris, of No. 37 Upper Berkeley Mews, had, by means of mental control, taken over the mind of Sir Lewis and compelled him to draw one thousand and pounds out of his bank. While Sir Lewis was returning to Harris with the money, the United Nations Psychodeviant Police had laid a trap. Sir Lewis, upon recovering his senses when Harris was rendered unconscious by a stun gun, had given evidence to the PD Police and to officials at New Scotland Yard.

Houston looked at the full-color photo of Harris that was printed alongside the column. Nice-looking chap; late twenties or early thirties,

Houston guessed. Blond-red hair, blue eyes. All-in-all, a very pleasant, but ordinary sort of man.

There had been evidence that a Controller had been at work in London for some weeks now. Twelve days before, several men, following an impulse, had mailed twenty pounds to a "Richard Hempstead," General Delivery, Waterloo Station. By the time the matter had come to the authorities' attention, the envelopes had been called for and the Controller had escaped.

Robert Harris was not the first Controller to be captured, nor, Houston knew, would he be the last. The first one had shown up more than sixteen years before, in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Houston grinned as he thought of it. Projective telepathy had only been a crackpot's idea back then. In spite of the work of many intelligent, sane men, who had shown that mental powers above and beyond the ordinary did exist, the average man simply laughed off such nonsense. It was mysticism; it was magic; it was foolish superstition. It was anything but true.

But ever since "Blackjack" Donnelly had practically taken

control of the whole city of Dallas, the average man had changed his mind. It was still mysterious; it was still magic; but now the weird machinations of the supernormal mind were something to be feared.

In the sixteen years that had ensued since the discovery of the abnormal mental powers of "Blackjack" Donnelly, rumors had spread all over the world. There were supposed to be men who could levitate—fly through the air at will. Others could walk through walls, and still others could make themselves invisible. The horrible monsters that were supposed to be walking the Earth were legion.

Actually, only one type of supernormal psychodeviant had been found—the telepath, the mindreader who could probe into the mental processes of others. Worse than that, the telepath could project his own thoughts into the mind of another, so that the victim supposed that the thoughts were his own. Actually, it was a high-powered form of hypnotism; the victim could be made to do anything the projective telepath wanted him to.

"Blackjack" Donnelly had

made that clear in his trial in Texas.

Donnelly had been a big man—big physically, and important in city politics. He had also been as arrogant as the Devil himself.

It was the arrogance that had finally tripped up Donnelly. He had thought himself impregnable. Haled into court on charges of misappropriation of public funds, he had just sat and smirked while several witnesses for the State admitted that they had aided Donnelly, but they claimed he had "hypnotized" them. Donnelly didn't try to interfere with the evidence—that's where he made his mistake. And that's where his arrogance tripped him up.

If he'd used telepathic projection to influence the State Attorney or the witnesses or the judge or the Grand Jury *before* the trial, he might never have been discovered as the first of the Controllers. But that wasn't Donnelly's style.

"None of this namby-pamby stuff," he had once been quoted as saying; "if you got enemies, don't tease 'em—show 'em who's running things. Blackjack 'em, if you have to."

And that's exactly what

"Blackjack" Donnelly had done. The trial was a farce from beginning to end; each witness gave his evidence from the stand, and then Donnelly took control of their minds and made them refute every bit of it, publicly and tearfully apologizing to the "wonderful Mr. Donnelly" for saying such unkind things about him.

The judge and the jury knew something funny was going on, but they had no evidence, one way or another. The case, even at that point, might have ended with an acquittal or a hung jury, but Donnelly wasn't through using his blackjack.

He took over the mind of the foreman of the jury. The foreman claimed later that the jury had decided that they could reach no decision. Other jurors claimed that they had decided Donnelly was guilty, but that was probably an *ex post facto* switch. It didn't matter, anyway; when the foreman came out, he pronounced Donnelly innocent. That should have ended it.

The other jurors began to protest, but by that time, Donnelly had gained control of the judge's mind. Rapidly, the judge silenced the jurors, declared Donnelly to be free, and then publicly apologized for

ever daring to doubt Mr. Donnelly.

The State's Attorney was equally verbose in his apology; he was almost in tears because of his "deep contrition at having cast aspersions on the spotless character of so great a man."

Donnelly was released.

The next evening, "Black-jack" Donnelly was shot down at the front door of his own home. There were fifteen bullets in his body; three from a .32, five from a .38, and seven from a .45.

The police investigation was far from thorough; any evidence that may have turned up somehow got lost. It was labelled as "homicide committed by person or persons unknown," and it stayed that way.

Donnelly was only the first. In the next two years, four more showed up. Everyone of them, in one way or another, had attempted to gain power or money by mental projection. Everyone of them was a twisted megalomaniac.

Houston looked again at Harris's picture on the front page of the *Times*. Here was one Controller who neither looked nor acted like a megalomaniac. That wouldn't make much difference to the PD Po-

lice; as far as the officials were concerned, the ability to project telepathically and the taint of delusions of grandeur went hand in hand. Controllers were power-mad and criminal by definition.

Fear still ruled the emotional reactions against Controllers, in spite of the protection of the Psychodeviant Police.

But David Houston knew damned good and well that all telepaths were not necessarily insane.

He should know. He was a Controller, himself.

Brrrrring!

David Houston tossed the paper on the bed and walked over to the phone. He cut in the circuit, and waited for the phone's TV screen to show the face of his caller. But the screen remained blank.

"Who is it?" Houston asked.

"Is this CHAring Cross 7-8161?" It was a woman's voice, soft and well-modulated.

"No, this is CHElsea 7-8161," Houston said. "You must have dialed C-H-E instead of C-H-A."

"Oh, I'm very sorry. Excuse me." There was a click, and she hung up.

Houston walked back over to the bed and picked up his

paper. He looked at it, but he didn't read it. It no longer interested him.

So Dorrine was finally in London, eh? He'd recognized her voice instantly; even years of training couldn't smother the midwestern American of Chicago completely beneath the precise British of the well-educated English girl.

The signal had been agreed upon, just in case his phone was tapped. Even the Psycho-deviant Police could be suspected of harboring a Controller — although Houston didn't think it too likely. Nevertheless, he wasn't one to take too many chances.

He glanced at his watch. He had an hour yet. He'd wait five minutes before he phoned headquarters.

He sat down in his chair again and forced himself to relax, smoke a cigarette, and read the paper—the sports section. Perusing the records of the season's cricket matches kept his mind off that picture on the front page. At least, he hoped they would. Let's see, now—Benton was being rated as the finest googly bowler on the Staffordshire Club . . .

Everything went fine until he came across a reference to

a John Harris, a top-flight batsman for Hambledon; that reminded him of Robert Harris. Houston threw down the paper in disgust and walked over to the phone.

The number was TROWbridge 5-4321, but no one ever bothered to remember it. Simply dial 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1, and every time a voice at the other end would answer—

"Hamilton speaking."

"Houston here; will I be needed in the next hour or so?"

"Mmmm. Just a second; I'll check the roster. No; your evidence won't be needed personally. You've filed an affidavit. No, I don't think—wait a minute! Yes, there's a return here for you; reservation on the six A.M. jet to New York. Your job here is done, Houston, so you can take the rest of the evening off and relax. Going anywhere in particular?"

"I thought I'd get a bite to eat and take in a movie, maybe, but if I'm due out at six, I'll forego the cinematic diversion. When's the trial?"

"It's scheduled for eleven-thirty this evening. Going to come?"

Houston shook his head. "Not if I'm not needed to give evidence. Those Controllers always give me the creeps."

"They do everybody," said Hamilton. "Well, you caught him; there's no need for you to stick around for the wind-up. Have a good time."

"Thanks," said Houston shortly, and hung up.

The windup, Houston thought. *Sure. That's all it will be. A Controller's trial is a farce. Knock him out with a stun gun and then pump him full of comatol. How can he defend himself if he's unconscious all through the trial?*

Houston knew what the average man's answer to that would be: "If a Controller were allowed to remain conscious, he'd take over the judge's mind and get himself freed."

Houston said an obscene word under his breath, jammed his hat on his head, put on his coat, and left his apartment.

With the coming of darkness, the heavy fog had become still denser. The yellow beams of the sodium vapor lamps were simply golden spots hanging in an all-enveloping blackness. Walking the street was a process of moving from one little golden island of light to another, crossing seas of blankness between. The monochromatic yellow shone on the human

faces that passed beneath the lamps, robbing them of all color, giving them a dead, grayish appearance beneath the yellow itself.

David Houston walked purposefully along the pavement, his hand jammed deep in his overcoat pockets. One hand held the control box for the little earpiece he wore. He kept moving the band selector, listening for any sign that the Psychodeviant Police were suspicious of a Controller in their midst.

If they were following him, of course, they would use a different scrambler circuit than the one which was plugged into his own unit, but he would be able to hear the gabble of voices, even if he couldn't understand what they were saying.

So far, there hadn't been a sound; if he was being followed, his tailers weren't using the personal intercom units.

He didn't try to elude anyone who might be following. That, in itself, would be a giveaway. Let them watch, if they were watching. They wouldn't see anything but a man going to get himself a bit of dinner.

The *Charles II Inn*, on Regent Street, near Piccadilly Circus, was a haven of

brightness in an otherwise Stygian London. It was one of those "old-fashioned" places—Restoration style of decoration, carried out in modern plastics. The oak panelling looked authentic enough, but it was just a little too glossy to be real.

Houston pushed open the door, stepped inside, removed his hat and coat and shook the dampness from them. As he handed them to the checker, he looked casually around. Dorrine was nowhere in sight, but he hadn't expected her to be. There would be no point in their meeting physically; it might even be downright dangerous.

The headwaiter, clad in the long waistcoat and full trunk-hose of the late Seventeenth Century, bowed punctiliously.

"You're alone, sir?"

"Alone, yes," Houston said. "I'll just be wanting a light supper and a drink or two."

"This way, sir."

Houston followed the man to a small table in the rear of the huge dining room. It was set for two, but the other place was quickly cleared away. Houston ordered an Irish-and-soda from a waiter who was only slightly less elaborately dressed than the headwaiter, and then settled himself down to wait. If he

knew Dorrine, she would be on time to the minute.

She came while the waiter was setting the drink on Houston's table. She stepped in through the door, her unmistakable hair glowing a rich red in the illumination of the pseudo-candlelight.

She didn't bother to look around; she knew he would be there.

After a single glance, Houston averted his eyes from her and looked back at his drink.

And in that same instant, their minds touched.

Dave, darling! I knew you'd be early!

Dorrine!

And then their minds meshed for an instant.

I — (we) — you — LOVE — you — (each other) — me! — us!

Houston looked complacently at his drink while the headwaiter led Dorrine to a table on the far side of the room. She sat down gracefully, smiled at the waiter, and ordered a cocktail. Then she took a magazine from her handbag and began—presumably—to read.

Her thought came: *Who is this Richard Harris? He's not one of our Group.*

Houston sipped at his drink. *No. An unknown, like*

the others. I wonder if he's even a telepath.

What? Her thought carried astonishment. Why, Dave—he'd have to be! How else could he have controlled this Sir Lewis—whatsisname—Huntley?

Well—I've got a funny idea, Houston replied. Look at it this way: So far as we know, there are two Groups of telepaths. There's our own Group. All we want is to be left alone. We don't read a Normal's mind unless we have to, and we don't try to control one unless our lives are threatened. We stay under cover, out of everyone's way.

Then there are the megalomaniacs. They try, presumably, to gain wealth and power by controlling Normals. And they get caught with monotonous regularity. Right?

The girl caught an odd note in that thought. *What do you mean, "monotonous regularity"? she asked.*

I mean, Houston thought savagely, why is it they're all so bloody stupid? Look at this Harris guy; he is supposed to have taken over Sir Lewis's mind in order to get a thousand pounds. So what did he have Sir Lewis do? Parade all around the city to pick up a PD Police net, and then give

his address to a cabman in a loud voice and lead the whole net right to Harris! How stupid can a man get?

It does look pretty silly, Dorrine agreed. Have you got an explanation?

Several, Houston told her. And I don't know which one is correct.

Let's have them, the girl thought.

Houston gave them to her. None of them, he knew, was completely satisfactory, but they all made more sense than the theory that Harris had done what the PD Police claimed he'd done.

Theory Number One: The real megalomaniac Controller had taken over Sir Lewis's mind and made him draw out the thousand pounds and head west on Leadenhall Street. Somehow, the Controller had found out that Sir Lewis was being followed, and had steered him away from the original destination, heading him toward the innocent Robert Harris. That implied that the Controller had been within a few dozen yards of the net men that afternoon. A Controller can't control a mind directly from a distance, although orders can be implanted which will cause a man to carry out a plan of action,

even though he may be miles from the Controller. But in order to change those plans, the Controller would have to be within projection range.

Theory Two: Robert Harris actually was a megalomaniac Controller; with a long record of success behind him, who had finally grown careless.

At that point, Dorrine interjected a thought: *Isn't it possible that he wanted to be caught?*

Houston mulled it over for a minute. *A guilt-punishment reaction? He wanted to be punished for his crimes? I suppose that might account for part of it, yes. But if he'd been so successful, what did he do with all his money?*

Dorrine gave a mental shrug. *Who knows? What's Theory Number Three?*

Number Three was the screwiest one of all, yet it made a weird kind of sense. Suppose that Sir Lewis himself had had a grudge against Harris? The whole thing would have been ridiculously easy; all he'd have to do would be to act just as he had acted and then give evidence against Harris.

The thing that made it odd wasn't the actual frame-up (if that's what it was); these days, every crime was blamed

on a Controller. A man accused of murder simply looked virtuous and said that he would never have done such a thing if he hadn't been under the power of a Controller. Ditto for robbery, rape, and any other felony you'd care to name.

An aura of fear hung over the whole Earth; each man half suspected everyone with whom he came in contact of being a Controller.

So it wasn't that the frame-up in itself was peculiar in this case; it was simply that it wasn't Sir Lewis Huntley's style. If Sir Lewis had wanted to get Harris, he'd have done it legally, without any underhanded frame-ups. Still, the theory remained as a possibility.

I suppose it does, Dorrine agreed, but how does that tie in with our own Group? What about Jackson and Marcy? What happened to them?

I don't know, Houston admitted, I just don't know.

Jackson and Marcy had been members of the Group of telepaths who had banded together for companionship and mutual protection. Both of them had been trapped by the PD Police in exactly the same way that Harris had been trapped. They were now where Harris would be in a

matter of hours—in the Penal Cluster.

Their arrests didn't make sense, either; they had been accused of taking over someone's mind for the purpose of gaining money illegally—illegal, that is, according to the new UN laws that had been passed to supersede the various national laws that had previously been in effect.

But Houston had known both men well, and neither of them was the kind of man who would pull such a stunt, much less do it in such a stupid manner.

Dorrine thought: *Well, Dave, this Harris case is out of our hands now; we've got to concentrate on getting others into the Group—we've got to find the other sane ones.*

You're ready to take over here, then? he asked.

At the table, several yards away from where Houston was sitting, Dorrine, still looking at the book, smiled faintly.

I'll have to; you're being transferred back to New York at six in the morning.

Houston allowed a feeling of startled surprise to bridge the gap between their minds. *How'd you know that?* He hadn't told her, and she couldn't have forced the

knowledge from his mind. A telepath can open the mind of a Normal as simply as he might open the pages of a book, but the mind of another Controller is far stronger. One telepath couldn't force anything from the mind of another; all thoughts had to be exchanged voluntarily.

She was still smiling. *We've got a few spies in the UN now,* she told him. *I got the information before you did.*

You knew before you left New York? he asked incredulously.

That's right, she thought. *The decision was made last night. Why?*

Nothing, he told her. *I was just surprised, that's all.* But deep behind the telepathic barrier he had erected against her probing mind, he was thinking something else. He had been assigned to London to capture the Controller—then unknown—who was said to be active in England. But his recall order had been decided upon *before* Harris was caught—or even suspected. Someone in the UN Psycho-deviant Police Supreme Headquarters in New York must have known that Harris would be caught that day!

Something's bothering you, Dorrine stated flatly.

I was thinking about leav-

ing London, he replied evasively. I haven't seen you for six months, and now I have to leave again.

I'll be back in New York within three weeks, the girl thought warmly. I'll be—

Her thoughts were cut off suddenly by a strident voice in Houston's ear. "Attention; all-band notice. Robert Bentley Harris, arraigned this evening on a charge of illegal use of psychodeviant powers for the purpose of compounding a felony, has been found guilty as charged. He was therefore sentenced by the Lord Justice of Her Majesty's Court of Star Chamber to be banished from Earth forever, such banishment to be carried out by the United Nations Penology Service at the Queen's pleasure."

The words that were running through Houston's brain, had been transmitted easily to Dorrine. For a moment, neither of them made any comment. Then Houston glanced at his watch.

Twenty-one minutes, he thought bitterly. What took them so long?

High in the thin ionosphere, seventy miles above the surface of the Earth, a fifteen-hundred-mile-an-hour rocket airliner winged its way west-

ward across the Atlantic, pushing herself forward on the thin, whispering, white-hot jets of her atomic engine. Behind her, the outdistanced sun sank slowly below the eastern horizon.

David Houston wasn't watching the sunrise-in-reverse; he was sitting quietly in his seat, still trying to puzzle out his queer recall to New York. When Hamilton had told him about it over the phone, he'd assumed that New York, having been notified that Harris had been captured, had decided to send for Houston, now that his job was over.

But now he knew that the order had come through nearly twenty-four hours before Harris was captured.

Did someone at UN Headquarters know that Harris was going to be captured? Or did someone there suspect that there was something odd about Police Operative David Houston?

Or both?

Whatever it was, Houston would have to take his chances; to act suspiciously would be a deadly mistake.

A stewardess, clad in the chic BOAC uniform, moved down the aisle, quietly informing the passengers that they could have coffee served at

their seats or take breakfast in the lounge. The atmosphere of the plane's interior was filled with the low murmur of a hundred conversations against the background of the sussurant mutter of the mighty engines.

Uhhh — uh — uh — dizzy — head hurts — uh — uh —

The sounds in the plane altered subtly as the faint thought insinuated itself on every brain inside the aircraft. None of the Normal passengers recognized it for what it was; it was too gentle, too weak, to be recognized directly by their minds.

But David Houston recognized it instantly for what it was.

Somewhere on the plane, a Controller had been unconscious. *Had* been. For now, his powerful mind was trying to swim up from the black depths of nothingness.

Uh — uhhhh — uhh —

The Normal passengers became uneasy, not knowing why they were disturbed. To them, it was like a vaguely unpleasant but totally unrecognizable nudge from their own subconscious, like some long-forgotten and deeply buried memory that had been forced down into oblivion and was now trying to obtrude itself on the conscious mind.

Uhhh — Oooohh — where? — what happened? —

A fully conscious telepath could project his thoughts along a narrow locus, focusing them on a single brain, leaving all other brains oblivious to his thoughts. Like a TV broadcasting station, he could choose his wavelength and stick to it.

But a half-conscious Controller sprayed his thoughts at random, creating mental disturbances in his vicinity. Like a thunderstorm creating radio static, there was no selectivity.

Savagely, David Houston did what he had to do. It might be a trap, but he had to avoid the carnage that might follow if this went on. He hurled a beam of thought, hard-held, at the offending mind of the awakening telepath.

DON'T THINK! RELAX!

Normally it was impossible for a Controller to take over the mind of another Controller, but these were abnormal circumstances; the half-conscious man, whoever he was, was weakened mentally by some kind of enforced unconsciousness—either a drug or a stun gun. Houston took over his mind smoothly and easily.

Robert Harris!

Houston recognized the mind as soon as he held it.

He didn't try to force anything on Harris's mind; he simply held it, cradling it, helping Harris to regain consciousness easily, bringing him up from the darkness gently.

In normal sleep, everyone's mind retains a certain amount of self-control and awareness of environment. If it didn't, noise and bright lights wouldn't awaken a sleeping person.

In normal sleep, a telepath retained enough control to keep his thoughts to himself, even when waking up.

But total anesthesia brought on a mental blackout from which the victim recovered only with effort. And during that time, a Controller's mind was violently disturbing to the Normal minds around him, who mistook his disordered thoughts for their own.

Like pouring heavy oil on choppy waters, Houston soothed the disturbances of Harris's mind, focusing the random broadcasts on his own brain.

And while he did that, he probed gently into the weakened mind of the prisoner for information.

Harris was a Controller, all right; there was no doubt about that. But nowhere in his mind was there any trace of any knowledge of what had happened to Sir Lewis Huntley. If Sir Lewis had actually been controlled, it hadn't been done by Robert Harris.

Houston wished he'd been able to probe Sir Lewis's mind; he'd have been able to get a lot more information out of it than he had in his possession now. But that would have been dangerous; if Sir Lewis was a Controller himself, and had been acting a part, Houston would have given himself away the instant he attempted to touch the baronet's mind. If, on the other hand, Sir Lewis had actually been under the control of another telepath, any probing into the mind of the puppet would have betrayed Houston to the real Controller.

Harris knew nothing. He wasn't acquainted with any other Controllers, and had kept his nose clean ever since he'd discovered his latent powers. He knew that megalomaniac Controllers were either captured or mobbed, and he had no wish to experience either.

The Normals had long since discovered that the only way

to overcome a Controller was by force of numbers. A Controller could only hold one Normal mind at a time. That was why a mob could easily kill a single Controller; that was why the Psychodeviant Police had evolved the "net" system for arresting a telepath.

Harris, then, had been framed. Or could it be called a frame-up when Harris was really guilty of the actual crime? Because the crime he had really been accused of was not that of controlling Sir Lewis, but the crime of being a telepath. That, and that alone, damned him in the eyes of the Normals; the crime of taking over a mind for gain was incidental. The stigma lie in what he *was*, not what he did.

Harris himself was in the bottom of the plane, in the baggage section near the landing gear. After his trial, still drugged, he had been secretly put aboard, to be taken to the Long Island Spaceport in New York. It had had to be secret; no Normal would knowingly ride on an aircraft which carried a Controller, even if he were drugged into total unconsciousness.

With Harris were two PD Police guards. Their low conversation impinged on Har-

ris's ears, and was transmitted to Houston's mind.

Suddenly, one of them said: "Hey! He's moving!"

"Better give him another shot, Harry," said the other, "when those guys wake up, they drive you crazy."

Houston could almost feel the sting of the needle as it was inserted into the arm of the helpless prisoner.

Slowly, Harris's thoughts, which had begun to become fully coherent, again became chaotic, finally sliding off into silence and darkness.

"Are you all right, sir?"

Houston looked up from his intense concentration. The stewardess was standing by his seat. He realized that there was a film of perspiration on his brow, and that he probably had looked dazed while he was concentrating on Harris's mind.

"Sure," he said quickly, "I'm all right. I'm just a little tired. Had to get up too early to catch this plane." He rubbed his forehead. "I do have a little headache; would you happen to have any aspirin aboard?"

She smiled professionally. "Certainly, sir. I'll get a couple of tablets."

As she left for the first-aid cabinet, Houston thought bleakly to himself: *Harris*

was framed. Possibly others have been, too. But by whom? And why?

He could see why a Normal might do such a thing. But why would a Controller do it?

There was only one answer. Somewhere, there was a Controller, or a group of Controllers who were megalomaniacs *par excellence*. If that were so, he—or they—could make the late "Blackjack" Donnelly look like a meek, harmless, little mouse.

The one part of Continental U.S.A. over which the American Government had no jurisdiction was small, areawise, in comparison with its power. The District of the United Nations occupied the small area of Manhattan Island which ran from 38th Street on the south to 49th Street on the north; its western border was Third Avenue, its eastern, the East River. From here, the UN ruled Earth.

There were no walls or fences around it; only by looking at street signs could anyone tell that they had crossed an international border. Crossing Third Avenue from west to east, one found that 45th Street had suddenly become Deutschland Strasse; 40th Street became Rue de France; 47th was the Via

Italiano. 43rd Street's sign was painted in Cyrillic characters, but beneath it, in English, were the words "Avenue of Mother Russia."

Third Avenue was technically One World Drive. Second Avenue was labelled as Planetary Peace Drive, and First was United Nations Drive.

But New Yorkers are, and always have been, diehards. Just as The Avenue of the Americas had forever remained Sixth Avenue, no matter what the maps called it, so had the other streets retained their old names in conversation.

Even the International Post Office, after years of wrangling, had given up, and letters addressed to *Supreme Headquarters, United Nations Police, 45th Street at Second Avenue*, were delivered without comment, even though the IPO still firmly held that they were technically misaddressed. And, privately, even the IPO officials admitted that the numbers were easier to say and remember than the polyglot street names that had been tagged on by the General Assembly.

So when David Houston signalled a taxi at Grand Central Station and said, "Forty-fifth and Second," the driver simp-

ly set his automatic controls, leaned back in his seat, and said, "Goin' to see the cops, huh?"

When no answer was forthcoming, the driver turned around and took a good look at his passenger. "Maybe you're a UN cop yourself, huh?"

Houston shook his head. "Nope. Some kids have been scribbling dirty words on my sidewalk, and I'm going to report it to the authorities."

The driver turned back around and looked ahead again. "Jeez! That's serious. Hadn't you better take it up with the Secretary General? I wouldn't be satisfied with no underlings in a case like that."

"I'm thinking of taking it up with the Atomic Energy Control Board," Houston told him. "I think those kids are using radioactive chalk."

"That's one way for 'em to get blue jeans," said the driver cryptically.

There was silence for a moment as the taxi braked smoothly to a halt, guided and controlled by the automatic machinery in the hood.

Then, suddenly, the driver said: "Ship up!" He pointed east, along 45th Street, toward Long Island. Far in the distance was a rapidly rising

vapor trail, pointing vertically toward the sky, the unmistakable sign of a spaceship takeoff. They didn't leave often, and it was still an unusual sight.

Houston said nothing as he climbed out and paid the driver, tossing in an extra tip.

"Thanks, buddy," said the driver. "Watch out for them kids."

Houston didn't answer. He was still watching the vapor trail as the cab pulled away.

There goes Harris, he was thinking. An innocent man, guilty of nothing more than being born different. And because of that, he's labelled as an inhuman monster, not even worthy of being executed. Instead, he's taken into space, filled full of hibernine, and chained to a floating piece of rock for the rest of his life.

Such was humanity's "humane" way of taking care of the bogey of Controllers. Capital punishment had been outlawed all over Earth; it had long since been proved that legalized murder, execution by the State, solved nothing, helped no one, prevented no crimes, and did infinitely more harm than good in the long run.

With the coming of the Controllers, a movement had

arisen to bring back the old evil of judicial murder, but it had been quickly put down when the Penal Cluster plan had been put forth as a more "humane" method.

Hibernene was a drug that had been evolved from the study of animals like the bear, which spent its winters in an almost death-like sleep. A human being, given a proper dosage of the drug, lapsed into a deep coma. The bodily processes were slowed down; the heart throbbed sluggishly, once every few minutes; thought ceased. It was the ideal prison for a mental offender that ordinary prisons could not hold.

But it wasn't quite enough for the bloodthirsty desire for vengeance that the Normals held for the Controllers. There had to be more.

Following Earth in its orbit around the sun, trailing it by some ninety-three million miles, were a group of tiny asteroids, occupying what is known as the Trojan position. They were invisible from Earth, being made of dark rock and none of them being more than fifteen feet in diameter. But they had been a source of trouble in some of the early expeditions to Mars, and had been carefully charted by the Space Commission.

Now a use had been found for them. A man in a space-suit could easily be chained to one of them. With him was a small, sunpowered engine and tanks of liquified food concentrates and oxygen. Kept under the influence of hibernene, and kept cool by the chill of space, a man could spend the rest of his life there—unmoving, unknowing, uncaring, dead as far as he and the rest of Mankind were concerned—his slight bodily needs tended automatically by machine.

It was a punishment that satisfied both sides of the life-or-death argument.

Houston shook off the bleak, black feeling of terrible chill that had crept over him and pushed his way into the UN Police building.

The thirteenth floor housed the Psychodeviant Division. As he stood in the rising elevator, Houston wondered wryly if the number 13 was good luck or bad in this case.

He stepped out of the elevator and headed for the Division Chief's office.

Division Chief Reinhardt was a heavy-set, balding man, built like a professional wrestler. His cold blue eyes gleamed from beneath shaggy, overhanging brows, and his face was almost expression-

less except for a faint scowl that crossed it from time to time. In spite of the fact that a Canadian education had wiped out all but the barest trace of German accent, his Prussian training, of the old Junkers school, was still evident. He demanded—and got—precision and obedience from his subordinates, although he had no use for the strictly military viewpoint of obsequiousness towards one's superiors.

He was sitting behind his desk, scowling slightly at some papers on it when Houston stepped in.

"You wanted me to report straight to you, Mr. Reinhardt?"

Reinhardt looked up, his heavy face becoming expressionless. "Ah, Houston. Yes; sit down. You did a fine job on that London affair; that's what I call coming through at the last moment.

"How so?"

"Your orders to return," he said, "were cut before you found your man. We have a much more important case for you than some petty pilfering Controller. We are after much more dangerous game."

Houston nodded. "I see." Inwardly, he wondered. It was almost as if Reinhardt

knew that Houston had found out that the recall had come early. Houston would have given his right arm at that moment to be able to probe Reinhardt's mind. But he held himself back. He had, in the past, sent tentative probes toward the Division Chief and found nothing, but he didn't know whether it would be safe now or not. It would be better to wait.

Reinhardt stood up, walked to the wall, and turned on a display screen. He twisted a knob to a certain setting, and a map of Manhattan Island sprang onto the screen in glowing color.

"As you know," Reinhardt said pedantically, "no Controller can do a perfect job of controlling a normal person. No matter how much he may want to make John Smith act naturally, some of the personality of the Controller will show up in the actions of John Smith. Am I correct?"

Houston nodded without saying anything. The question was purely rhetorical, and the statement was perfectly correct.

"Very well, then," Reinhardt continued, "by means of these peculiarities, our psychologists have found that there is widespread, but very

subtle controlling going on right in the UN General Assembly itself! The amazing thing is that they all bear the—shall we say—trademark of the same Controller. Whoever he is, he seems to have a long-range plan in mind; he wants to change, ever so slightly, certain international laws so that he will profit by them. Do you follow?"

"I follow," said Houston.

"Good. It has taken pains-taking research and a great deal of psychological statistical analysis, but we have found that one company—and one company only—benefits by these legal changes. Did you ever hear of Lasser & Sons?"

"Sure," said Houston. "They're in the import-export business, with a few fingers in shipping and air transport."

"That's them," said Reinhardt. "Someone in that company, presumably someone at the top, is a Controller. And he's a very subtle, very dangerous man. Unlike the others, there is nothing hasty or overt in his plans. But within a few years, if this goes on, he will have more power than the others ever dreamed of."

"And my job is to get him?" Houston asked.

Reinhardt nodded. "That's it. Get him. One way or an-

other. You're in charge; I don't care how you do it, but this one Controller is more dangerous than any other we've come across, so get him."

Houston nodded slowly. "Okay. Can you give me all the data you have so far?"

Reinhardt patted a heavy folder on his desk. "It's all here." Then he tapped the projected map on the screen. "That's the Lasser Building—Church Street at Worth. Somewhere in there is the man we're looking for."

David Houston spent the next six weeks gathering facts, trying to determine the identity of the mysterious Controller at Lasser & Sons. Slowly, the evidence began to pile up.

At the same time, he worried over his own problem. Who was betraying non-criminal Controllers to the PD Police?

In that six-week period, two more men and a woman were arrested—one in Spain, one in India, and one in Hawaii.

There weren't very many Controllers on Earth, percentage-wise. Of the three and a half billion people on Earth, less than an estimated one-thousandth of one percent

were telepathic. But that made a grand total of some thirty-five thousand people.

Spread, as they were, all over the planet, it was rare that one Controller ever met another. The intelligent ones didn't use their power; they remained concealed, even from each other.

But *someone*, somewhere, was finding them and betraying them to the Psychodeviant Police.

As more and more data came in on the Lasser case, Houston began to get an idea. If there were a really clever, highly intelligent, megalomaniac Controller, wouldn't it be part of his psychological pattern to attempt to get rid of the majority of Controllers, those who simply wanted to lead normal lives?

And, if so, wasn't it possible that both his cases—the official and the unofficial—might lead to the same place: Lasser & Sons?

It began to look as though Houston could kill both his birds at once, if he could just figure out when, how, and in what direction to throw the stone.

In the middle of the seventh week, a Controller in Manchester, England, was mobbed and torn to bits by an irate crowd before the PD Po-

lice could get to him. There was no doubt in Houston's mind that this one was a real megalomaniac; he had taken over another man's brain and forced him to commit suicide. The controlled man had taken a Webley automatic, put it to his temple, and blown his brains out.

The Controller's mistake was in not realizing what the sudden shock of that bullet, transmitted to him telepathically, could do to his own mind. In the mental disorder that followed, he was spotted and killed easily.

There was still no word from Dorrine. She had flown back to the States a week after Houston had returned, but she had had to get back to England after three days. Since then, he had had three letters, nothing more. And letters are a damned unsatisfactory way for a telepath to conduct a love affair.

The one other factor that entered in was The Group, the small band of sane, reasonable telepaths who had begun to build themselves into an organization—a sort of Mutual Protective Association.

Personally, Houston didn't think much of the idea; the Group didn't have any real organization, and they refused

to put one together. It was supposed to be democratic, but it sometimes bordered on the anarchic.

He stayed with them more for companionship than any other reason. When Dorrine had come back for her short stay, Houston had met with them and tried to get them to help him trace down the megalomaniac Controller who was doing so much damage, but they'd balked at the idea. Their job, they claimed, was to get enough members so that they could protect themselves from arrest by the Normals, and then just let things ride.

"After all," Dorrine had said, "things will work themselves out, darling; they always do."

"Not unless somebody helps them, they don't," Houston had snapped back. "Someone has to do something."

"But, Dave, darling—we are doing something! Don't you see?"

He didn't, but there was no convincing either the Group or Dorrine. She was passionately interested in the recruiting work she was doing, and she thought that the Group was the answer to every Controller's troubles.

And then she had rushed back to England. "I'll be back soon, Dave," she'd said. "I

think I have a lead on a girl in Liverpool."

So far, the girl hadn't been found. Controllers didn't like to give themselves away to anyone, so they kept a tight screen up most of the time.

It seemed as though everyone on Earth was in deadly fear all the time. The Normals feared losing their identities to Controllers, and the Controllers feared death at the hands of the Normals.

And death or the Penal Cluster were their only choices if they were discovered.

Houston worried about the risks Dorrine was taking, but there was nothing he could do. She was doing what she thought was right, just as he was; how could he argue with that?

Houston went on with his job, putting together facts and rumors and statistical data analysis, searching out his quarry.

And, at the end of the eighth week, everything blew high, wide, and hellish.

It was late evening. A cool wind blew over New York, bringing with it a hint of the rain to come. Church Street, in lower Manhattan, was not crowded, as it had been in the late afternoon, but neither

was it entirely deserted. The cafes and bars did a lively business, but the tall, many-colored office buildings gaped at the street with blind and darkened eyes. Only a few of the windows glowed whitely with fluorescent illumination.

In one of the small coffee shops, David Houston sat, smoking a cigarette and stirring idly at a cup of cooling coffee.

Across the street was the Lasser Building; high up on the sixtieth floor, a whole suite of offices was brightly lit. The rest of the building was clothed in blackness.

Who was up there in that suite? Houston wasn't quite sure. He had narrowed his list of suspects down to three men: John Sager, Loris Pederson, and Norcross Lasser, three top officials in the company. Sager and Pederson were both vice-presidents of the firm; Sager was in charge of the Foreign Exports department, while Pederson handled the actual shipping. Lasser, by virtue of being the grandson of the man who had founded the firm, was president of Lasser & Sons, Inc.

Lasser seemed like a poor choice as chief villain of the outfit; he was a mild, bland man, quiet and friendly. Besides, his position made him

an obvious suspect; naturally, the majority stockholder of the firm would profit most by the increased power of the company. And, equally obviously, a Controller wouldn't want to put himself in such an exposed position.

Which made Lasser, in Houston's mind, a hell of a good suspect. If anything happened, Lasser could cover by claiming that he, too, had been controlled, and the chances were that he could get away with it. A Controller never did anything directly; their dirty work was done by someone else—a puppet under their mental control. At least, so ran the popular misconception. If Lasser were the man, he stood a good chance of getting away with it, even if he were caught, provided he played his cards right.

That reasoning still didn't eliminate Sager or Pederson. Either of them could be the Controller. And there still remained the possibility that some unknown, unsuspected fourth person had the company of Lasser & Sons under his thumb.

That was what Houston intended to find out tonight.

He took a sip of his coffee, found it still reasonably hot. Damn the megalomaniacs,

anyway! Houston subconsciously tightened his fists. He, personally, had more to fear from the Normals than from another Controller. Normals could kill or imprison him, while a Controller would have a hard time doing either, directly.

But Houston could understand the Normal man; he could see how fear of a Controller could drive a man without the ability into a frenzied panic. He could understand, even forgive their actions, born and bred in ignorance and fear.

No, the ones he hated were the ones who had conceived and fostered that fear—the psychologically unstable megalomaniac Controllers. There were only a handful of them—probably not more than a few hundred or a thousand. But because of them, every telepath on Earth found his life in danger, and every Normal found his life a hell of terror.

Let Dorrine and her do-nothing friends run around the globe recruiting members for their precious Group; that was all right for them. Meanwhile, David Houston would be doing something on a more basic action level.

He glanced at his watch. Almost time.

"How's the deployment?" he whispered in his throat.

"We've got the building surrounded now," said the voice in his ear. "You can go in anytime."

"How about the roof?"

"That's taken care of, sir; we've got 'copter that can be on the top of the Lasser Building at any time you call. They can land within thirty seconds of your signal."

"Okay," Houston said; "I'm going in now. Remember—no matter what I say or do, no one is to leave that building if they're conscious. And keep your eyes on me; if I act in the least peculiar, handcuff me—but don't knock me out.

"And if I'm not back on time, come in anyway."

"Right."

Houston finished his coffee, dropped a coin on the counter, and headed for the other side of the street.

The big problem was getting into the building itself. It was ringed with alarms; Lasser & Sons didn't want just anybody wandering in and out of their building.

So Houston had arranged a roundabout way. The building next to the Lasser Building was a good deal smaller, only forty-five stories high. A week before, Houston had rented an

office on the eighteenth floor of the building; on the door, he had already had a sign engraved: Ajax Enterprises.

It was a shame the office would never be used.

Houston walked straight to the next-door building and opened the front door with his key. Inside, a night watchman lounged behind a desk, smoking a blackened briar. He looked up, smiled, and nodded.

"Evening, Mr. Griswold; working late tonight?"

Houston forced a smile he did not feel. "Just doing a little paper work," he said.

He took the automatic elevator to the fifteenth floor. He didn't relish the idea of walking up to the roof, but taking the elevator would make the nightwatchman suspicious.

He didn't bother going to the office; he headed directly for the stairway and began his long climb—twenty-seven floors to the roof.

All through it, he kept up a running comment through his throat mike. "I wish I weighed about fifty pounds less; carrying two hundred and twenty pounds of blubber up these stairs isn't easy."

"Blubber, hooey!" the earphone interrupted. "Any man who's six-feet-three has a right to carry that much weight. Actually, you're a

skinny-looking sort of goop."

Both men were exaggerating; Houston wasn't fat, but his broad, powerful frame couldn't be called skinny, either.

When he finally reached the roof, he paused and surveyed the wall of the Lasser Building, which towered high above him, spearing an additional thirty stories in the air. Up there, the lights on the sixtieth floor gleamed in the night.

The air was growing cooler, and the beginnings of a mist were forming. Houston hoped it wouldn't start to rain before he got inside.

The forty-sixth floor of the Lasser Building had no windows on this side, but there were plenty on the forty-seventh.

Leading up to them was an inviting looking fire escape, but Houston knew he didn't dare take that. By law, every fire escape was rigged with a fire alarm, in addition to the regular burglar alarm. He'd have to use another way.

The Lasser Building was a steel structure, shelled over with a bright blue anodized aluminum sheath. Only the day before, Houston, wearing the gray coverall of a power-line workman, had checked

the wall to find the big steel beams beneath the aluminum. He had also installed certain other equipment; now he was going to make use of it.

Concealed in the louvres of the air-conditioner intake of the lower building was a specially constructed suit and several hundred feet of power line which was connected to the main line of the building.

In the darkness, Houston slipped on the suit. It was constructed somewhat like a light diving suit or a spacesuit, but without the helmet. In the toes, knees, and hands, were powerful electromagnets controlled by switches in the fingers of the gloves and powered by the current in the long line.

Houston stepped over to the blue aluminum wall, reached out a hand, and lowered one finger. Instantly, the powerful magnet anchored his hand to the wall, held by the dense magnetic field to the steel beam beneath the aluminum sheath. That one magnet alone could support his full body weight, and he had six magnets to work with.

Slowly, carefully, David Houston began to crawl up the wall.

Turn on a magnet in the right hand; lift up the left hand and anchor it higher;

turn on the right hand and lift it even with the left, then anchor it again; do the same with both legs; then begin the process all over again, turning the magnets off and on in rotation.

Up and up he went. Past the forty-sixth floor, past the forty-seventh, the forty-eighth, and the forty-ninth. Not until he reached the fiftieth floor did he attempt to open one of the windows.

There was a magnetic lock inside the window, but Houston had taken that, too, into account. The powerful magnet in his right glove slid it aside easily. Houston lifted the window and stepped inside.

He had ten more floors to go.

He took off the suit and rolled it up into a tight package, then dropped it out the window. It landed with a barely audible thump. Houston took a deep breath, drew his stun gun, and headed for the stairway.

On the landing of the sixtieth floor of the Lasser Building, David Houston paused for a moment.

"Sounds like you're out of breath," said the voice in his ear.

"You try climbing all that way sometime," Houston

whispered. "I'm no superman, you know."

"Shucks," said the voice, "you've disillusioned me. What now?"

"I'm going to try to get a little information," Houston told him. "Hold on."

On the other side of the door, he could hear faint sound, as if someone were moving around, but he could hear no voices.

Carefully, he sent out a probing thought, trying to see if he could attune his mind with that of someone inside without betraying himself.

He couldn't detect anything. The sixtieth floor covered a lot of space; if whoever was inside was too far away, their thoughts would be too faint to pick up unless Houston stepped up his own power, and he didn't want to do that.

Cautiously, he reached out a hand and eased open the door.

The hallway was brightly lit, but there was no one in sight. The unaccustomed light made Houston blink for a moment before his eyes adjusted to it; the hallways and landings below had been pitch dark, forcing him to use a penlight to find his way up.

He stepped into the hallway, closing the door behind him.

Now he could hear voices. He stopped to listen. The conversation was coming from an office down the hall—if it could be called a conversation.

There would be long periods of silence, then a word or two: "But not that way." "Until tomorrow." "Vascillates."

There were three different voices.

Houston moved on down the hall, his stun gun ready. A few yards from the door, he stopped again, and, very gently, he sent out another thought-probe, searching for the minds of those within, carefully forging his way.

And, at that crucial instant, a voice spoke in his ear.

"Houston! What's going on? You haven't said a thing for two full minutes!"

"I'm all right!" Houston snapped. Only the force of long training and habit kept him from shouting the words aloud instead of keeping them to a subvocal whisper.

"All right or not," said the other, "we're coming in in seven minutes, as ordered. Meanwhile, there's a news bulletin for you; the British division has picked up another Controller—a woman named Dorrine Kent. Two in one

night ought to be a pretty good bag."

For a moment, Houston's mind was a meaningless blur.

Dorrine!

And then another voice broke through his shock.

"Dear me, sir! Calm yourself! You're positively fizzing!"

Houston jerked. Standing in the doorway of the office was Norcross Lasser, with a benign smile on his face and a deadly-looking .38 automatic in his hand. Behind him stood John Sager and Loris Pederson, their faces wary.

"Please drop that stun gun, Mr. Cop."

In those few moments, Houston had regained control of himself. He realized what had happened. The interruption of his thought-probe had startled him just a little, but that little had been enough to warn the Controller.

He wondered which of the three men was the actual Controller.

He began to lower his weapon, then, suddenly, with all the force and hatred he could muster, he sent a blistering, shocking thought toward the man with the gun.

Lasser staggered as though he'd been struck. His gun

wavered, and Houston fired quickly with his stun gun. At the same time, Lasser's automatic went off.

The bullet went wild, and the stun beam didn't do much better. It struck Lasser's hand, paralyzing it, but it didn't knock out Lasser.

The mental battle that ensued only took a half second, but at the speed of thought, a lot of things can happen in a half second.

Houston realized almost instantaneously that he had made a vast mistake. He had badly underestimated the enemy.

There was no need to worry, now, about which one of the men was a Controller—all *three of them were!*

As soon as Sager and Pederson realized what had happened, they leaped—mentally—into the battle. Lasser, already weakened by the unexpected mental blow from Houston, lost consciousness when the others let loose their blasts because his mind was still linked with Houston's, and he absorbed a great deal of the mental energy meant for Houston's brain.

Houston, fully warned by now, held up a denial wall which screened his mind from the worst that Sager and Pederson could put out, but he

knew he couldn't hold out for long.

"Come in—now!" he said hoarsely into the microphone.

"Stupid swine!" Sager susurrated sibilantly.

Pederson said nothing aloud, but his brain was blazing with fear and hatred. His gun hand jerked towards a holster under his arm. Lasser was still crumpling towards the floor.

The entire action had taken less than a second.

Houston tried to fire again with his stun gun, but it required every bit of concentration he could sum up to hold off the combined mental assaults of Sager and Pederson.

But they, too, were at somewhat of a disadvantage. In order to keep all their efforts concentrated on the PD policeman, both Controllers had to refrain from putting too much attention on their bodily motions. Pederson was still fumbling for his gun, and Sager hadn't yet started for his.

Lasser barely touched the floor before his consciousness began to return. The resulting fraction of a second of mental static afforded Houston a brief respite; it disturbed Pederson just as he was getting his fingers on the butt of his weapon.

Both Controllers were focusing their mental energies on Houston's brain, and during the brief respite, Houston made one vital mental adjustment. He allowed both thought-probes to fuse in a small part of his consciousness. They went *through* him and lashed back at the two Controllers.

Both of them had had their minds tuned to Houston's, and in that instant they found they were also attuned to each other.

The resultant of the energy was shocking to Houston, but it was infinitely worse for Sager and Pederson, since neither of them had been expecting it. Pederson, who had already been slightly distracted, got the major brunt of the force. He managed to jerk his gun free, but his brain was already lapsing into unconsciousness.

Houston's fingers tightened on his own weapon. It fired once at Lasser, who was trying to lift himself from the floor. Then it swept up and coughed again, dropping Pederson. His pistol barked once, sending a singing ricochet along the hall.

Sager, who had staggered to one side when he and Pederson had short-circuited

each other, had time to get behind the protection of the office door. He couldn't close it because Lasser's and Pederson's inert forms blocked the doorway, but at least it afforded protection against Houston's stun gun.

His thought came through to Houston: *So the stupid Normals have a Controller working for them! Traitor!*

You're the traitor, Houston thought coldly. *You and your megalomaniac friends. It's madmen like you who have made telepaths hated and feared by the Normals.*

And so they should hate and fear us, came the snarling mental answer. *Within a few generations, we will have supplanted them. We will control Earth—not they.*

The exchange had only taken a fraction of a second. Houston was already charging toward the open door, hoping to get inside before Sager could reach a weapon.

You call me a traitor, Houston thought, *but you have been framing innocent Controllers, putting them into the hands of the PD Police.*

That's a lie! the reply came hotly. *We would never betray another telepath to the stupid Normals! If a telepath were so bullheaded as to get in our*

way, we'd dispose of him. But it would be Controller justice; we wouldn't turn him over to animals!

In one blazing moment, Houston realized that the Controller was telling the truth!

No mental communication can be expressed properly in words. In, behind, and around each statement, other, dimmer nuances of thought gleam through. Each thought tells the receiver much more than can be put down in crude verbal symbols.

Thus, Houston already knew that Lasser, Sager, and Pederson were the three top men in a world-wide clique of megalomaniac Controllers. This was the top of the madmen's organization; these three were the *creme de la creme* of the Normal human's real enemies.

He knew that there were twelve others scattered over Earth, and he knew where and who they were. That brief exchange had brought all the information into Houston's own mind as it leaked from the minds of the others. He knew it without thinking about how he knew it.

And they were not the ones who had been turning the sane Controllers over to the Psychodeviant Police!

Then who was? And why? Houston was right back where he had started.

But that brief instant of confusion was Houston's downfall. Sager instantly realized that he had delivered, inadvertently, a telling blow to Houston's mind.

Physically, Houston had been propelling himself toward the open door. At the instant of the revelation, he had been part way through it. And at that moment, Sager acted.

He slammed all his weight violently against his side of the door, knocking Houston off balance as the door swung and struck him. He went down, and Sager was on top of him before he struck the floor.

It was the weirdest battle ever fought, but its true worth could only have been detected by another telepath. It was intense and brutal.

The men fought both physically and mentally. They struggled for possession of the stun gun, at the same time hurling emotion-charged shafts of mental energy at each other's brains.

The struggle lasted less than a minute. Somehow, Sager managed to get one hand on the gun, twisting it. Houston, trying to keep it out

of Sager's hand, jerked it up between them.

It coughed once, sending a beam of supersonic energy into the bodies of both men.

The effect was the same as if they had both been crowned with baseball bats.

Little pinpoints of light against a sea of darkness.

I'm cold, Houston thought. And I'm sick.

He couldn't tell whether his eyes were open or closed—and he didn't much care.

He tried to move his arms and legs, found he couldn't, and gave it up.

He blinked.

My eyes must be open, he thought, if I can blink.

Well, then, if his eyes were open, why couldn't he see anything? All he could see were the little pinpoints of light against a background of utter blackness.

Like stars, he thought.

Stars? STARS!

With a sudden rush, total awareness came back to him, and he realized with awful clarity where he was.

He was chained, spread-eagled, on an asteroid in the Penal Cluster, nearly a hundred million miles from Earth.

It was easy to piece together what had happened. He dimly remembered that he

had started to wake up once before. It was a vague, confused recollection, but he knew what had taken place.

The PD Police, coming in response to his call, had found all four men unconscious from the effects of the stun beam. Naturally, all of them had been taken into custody; the PD Police had to find out which one of the men was the Controller and which the controlled. That could easily be tested by waiting until they began to wake up; the resulting mental disturbances would easily identify the telepath.

Houston could imagine the consternation that must have resulted when the PD men found that all three suspects—and their brother officer—were Controllers.

And now here he was—tried, convicted, and sentenced while he was unconscious—doomed to spend the rest of his life chained to a rock floating in space.

A sudden chill of terror came over him. Why wasn't he asleep? Why wasn't he under hibernene?

It's their way of being funny, came a bitter thought. We're supposed to be under hibernene, but we're left to die, instead.

For a moment, Houston did not realize that the thought

was not his own, so well did it reflect his own bitterness. It was bad enough to have to live out one's life under the influence of the hibernation drug, but it was infinitely worse to be conscious. Under hibernene, he would have known nothing; his sleeping mind in his comatose body would never have realized what had happened to him. But this way, he would remain fully awake while his body used up the air too fast and his stomach became twisted with hunger pangs which no amount of intravenous feeding could quell. Oh, he'd live, all right—for a few months—but it would be absolute hell while he lasted. Insanity and catatonia would come long before death.

That's a nasty thought; I wish you hadn't brought it up.

That wasn't his own thought! There was someone else out here!

Hell, yes, my friend; we're all out here.

"Where are you?" Houston asked aloud, just to hear his own voice. He knew the other couldn't hear the words which echoed so hollowly inside the bubble of the spacesuit helmet, but the thought behind them would carry.

"You mean with relation to

yourself?" came the answer. "I don't know. I can see several rocks around me, but I can't tell which one you're on."

Houston could tell now that the other person was talking aloud, too. So great was the illusion carried to his own brain that it almost seemed as though he could hear the voice with his ears.

"Then there are others around us?" Houston asked.

"Sure. There were three of us: a Hawaiian named Jerry Matsukuo; a girl from Bombay, Sonali Siddhartha; and myself, Juan Pedro de Cadiz. Jerry and Sonali are taking a little nap. You're the first of your group to wake up."

"My group?"

"Certainly, my friend. There are five of you; the other four must still be unconscious."

Four? That would be Lasser, Sager, Pederson, and—and *Dorrine*!

Juan Pedro de Cadiz picked up the whole thought-process easily.

"The girl—I'm sorry," he said. "But the other three—of us all, I think, they deserve this."

"Juan!" came another thought-voice. "Have our newcomers awakened?"

"Just one of them, my

sweet," replied the Spaniard. "Sonali, may I present Mr. David Houston. Mr. Houston, the lovely Sonali Siddhartha."

"Juano has a habit of jumping to conclusions, David," said the girl. "He's never even seen me, and I'm sure that after three weeks of being locked in this prison whatever beauty I may have had has disappeared."

"Your thoughts are beautiful, Sonali," said Juan Pedro, "and with us, that is all that counts."

"It is written," said a third voice, "that he who disturbs the slumber of his betters will wake somebody up. You people are giving me dreams, with your ceaseless mental chatter."

"Ah!" the Spaniard said. "Mr. Matsukuo, may I—"

"I heard, Romeo, I heard," said the Hawaiian. "An ex-cop, eh? I wonder if I like you? I'll take a few thousand years to think it over; in the meantime, you may treat me as a friend."

"I'll try to live down my reputation," said Houston.

It was an odd feeling. Physically, he was alone. Around him, he could see nothing but the blackness of space and the glitter of the stars. He knew that the sun

must be shining on the back of his own personal asteroid, but he couldn't see it. As far as his body was concerned, there was nothing else in the universe but a chunk of pitted rock and a set of chains.

But mentally, he felt snug and warm, safe in the security of good friends. He felt—

"David! David! Help me! Oh, David, David, David!"

It was Dorrine, coming up from her slumber. Like a crashing blare of static across the neural band, her wakening mind burst into sudden telepathic activity.

Gently, Houston sent out his thoughts, soothing her mind as he had soothed Harris's mind weeks before. And he noticed, as he did it, that the other three were with him, helping. By the time Dorrine was fully awake, she was no longer frightened or panicky.

"You're wonderful people," she thought simply, after several minutes.

"To one so beautiful, how else could we be?" asked Juan Pedro.

"Ignore him, Dorrine," said Sonali, "he tells me the same thing."

"But not in the same way, *amiga!*" the Spaniard protested. "Not in the same way. The beauty of your mind,

Sonali, is like the beauty of a mountain lake, cool and serene; the beauty of Dorrine is like the beauty of the sun—warm, fiery, and brilliant."

"By my beard!" snorted Matsukuo. "Such blather!"

"I'll be willing to wager my beautiful *hacienda* in the lovely countryside of Aragon against your miserable palm-leaf *nipi* shack on Oahu that you have no beard," said Juan Pedro.

"Hah!" said Matsukuo: "that's all I need now—Castles in Spain."

It was suddenly dizzying for Houston. Here were five people, doomed to slow, painful death, talking as though there were nothing to worry about. Within minutes, each had learned to know the others almost perfectly.

It was more than just the words each used. Talking aloud helped focus the thoughts more, but at the same time, thousands of little, personal, fringe ideas were present with the main idea transmitted in words. Houston had talked telepathically to Dorrine hundreds of times, but never before had so much fine detail come through.

Why? Was there something different about space that made mental communication so much more complete?

"No, not that, I think," said Matsukuo. "I believe it is because we have lost our fear—not of death; we still fear death—but of betrayal."

That was it. They knew they were going to die, and soon. They had already been sentenced; nothing further could frighten them. Always before, on Earth, they had kept their thoughts to themselves, fearing to broadcast too much, lest the Normals find them out. The little, personal things that made a human being a living personality were kept hidden behind heavy mental walls. The suppression worked subconsciously, even when they actually wanted to communicate with another Controller.

But out here, there was nothing to fear on that score. Why should they, who were already facing death, be afraid of anything now?

So they opened up—wide. And they knew each other as no group of human beings had ever known each other. Every human being has little faults and foibles that he may be ashamed of, that he wants to keep hidden from others. But such things no longer mattered out here, where they had nothing but imminent death and the emptiness of space—and each other.

Physically, they were miserable. To be chained in one position, with very little room to move around, for three weeks, as Sonali had been, was torture. Sonali had been there longer than the others—for three days, there had been no one but herself out there in the loneliness of space.

But now, even physical discomfort meant little; it was easy to forget the body when the mind was free.

"What of the others?" Dorraine asked. "Where are the ones who were sentenced before us?"

Houston thought of Robert Harris. What had happened to the young Englishman?

"Space is big," said Juan Pedro. "Perhaps they are too far away for our thoughts to reach them—or perhaps they are already dead."

"Let's not talk of death." Sonali Siddhartha's thought was soft. "We have so many things to do."

"We will have a language session," said Juan Pedro. "Si?"

Matsukuo chuckled. "Good! Houston, until you've tried to learn Spanish, Hindustani, Arabic, Japanese, and French all at once, you don't know what a language session is. We—"

The Hawaiian's thought was suddenly broken off by a shrieking burst of mental static.

The effect was similar to someone dropping a handful of broken glass into an electric meat grinder right in the middle of a Bach cantata.

It was Sager, coming out of his coma.

Almost automatically, the five contacted his mind to relax him as he awoke. They touched his mind—and were repelled!

Stay out of my mind!

With almost savage fury, the still half-conscious Sager hurled thoughts of hatred and fear at the five minds who had tried to help him. They recoiled from the burst of insane emotion.

"Leave him alone," Houston thought sharply. "He's a tough fighter."

At first, Sager was terrified when he learned what had happened to him. Then the terror was mixed with a boiling, seething hatred. A hatred of the Normals who had done this to him, and an even more terrible hatred for Houston, the "traitor."

The very emptiness of space itself seemed to vibrate with the surging violence of his hatred.

"I know," Houston told him, "you'd kill me if you could. But you can't, so forget it."

Not even the power of that hatred could touch Houston, protected as he was by the combined strength of the other four same telepaths. He was comparatively safe.

Sager snarled like a trapped animal. "You're all insane! Look at you! The four of you, siding with a man who has betrayed us to the Normals! He—"

What Sager thought of Houston couldn't be put into words, and if it could no sane person would want to repeat the mad foulness in those words.

"This is unbearable!" Sonali thought softly.

"That's not a mind," said Dorrine, "it's a sewer."

"I suggest," said Matsukuo, "that we do a little probing. Let's find out what makes this thing tick."

"Stay out of my mind!" Sager screamed. "You have no right!"

"You seemed to think you had the right to probe into the helpless minds of Normals," said Juan Pedro coldly. "We should show you how it feels."

"But they're just animals!" Sager retorted. "I am a Controller!"

"You're a madman," said

Matsukuo. "And we must find out what makes you mad."

Synchronizing perfectly, five minds began to probe at the walls that Sager had built up around his personality. And as they probed, Sager retreated behind ever thicker walls, howling in hatred and anguish.

On and on went the five, needling, pressing at every weak spot, trying to break him down. Outnumbered and overpowered, it seemed as though Sager had no chance.

But his insanity was stronger than they suspected. The barriers he built were harder, more opaque, and more impenetrable than any they had ever seen. The five pushed on, anyway, but their advance slowed tremendously.

Then, mentally, there was a sudden silence.

Sager? they thought.

No answer.

"That's finished it," said Houston. "He's retreated so far behind those mental barriers that he's cut himself off completely."

"He's not dead, is he?" Dorrine asked.

"Dead?" said Juan Pedro. "Not in the sense you mean. But I think he is catatonic now; he has lost all touch with the outside. He is as though he were still drugged; he is

physically helpless, and mentally blanked out."

"There's one difference," Matsukuo said analytically. "And that is that, although he has cut himself off from us and from the rest of the universe, he is still conscious in some little, walled-in compartment of his mind. He has no one there but himself—and that, I think, is damned poor company."

They waited then. When Pederson awoke, they were ready for him. His hatred took a slightly different form from Sager's, but the effect was the same.

And so were the results when the five bore down on him.

Again they waited. Lasser was next.

At first, it looked as though Lasser would go the way of Sager and Pederson, ending up as a hopelessly insane catatonic. Like his cohorts before him, Lasser retreated under the full pressure of the thought-probes of the five, building stronger and stronger walls.

But, quite suddenly, all his defenses crumbled. The mental barriers went down, shattered and dissolving. Lasser's whole mind lay bare. Instead of fighting and hating, Lasser

was begging, pleading for help.

Lasser was not basically insane. His mind was twisted and warped, but beneath the outer shell was a personality that had enough internal strength to be able to admit that it was wrong and ask for help instead of retreating into oblivion.

"This one—I think we can do something with," Matsu-kuo's thought whispered.

Eight bodies, uncomfortable and pain-wracked, floated in space, chained to tiny asteroids that drifted slowly in their orbits under the constant pull of the sun. Two of them contained minds that were locked irrevocably within prisons of their own building, sealed off forever from external stimuli, but their suffering was the greater for all that.

The other six, chained though their limbs might be, had minds that were free—free, even, of any but the most necessary of internal limitations.

Eight bodies, chained to eight lumps of pitted rock, spun endlessly in endless space.

And then the ship came.

The flare of its atomic rocket could be seen for over

an hour before it reached the Penal Cluster. The six eyed it speculatively. Although only two of them were facing the proper direction to see it with their physical eyes, the impressions of those two were easily transmitted to the other four.

"Another load of captives," whispered Juan Pedro de Cadiz. "How many this time, I wonder?"

"How long have we been here?" asked Houston, not expecting any answer.

"Who knows?" It was Lasser. "What we need out here is a clock to tell us when we'll die."

"Our oxygen tanks are our clocks," said Sonali. "And they'll notify us when the time comes."

"I do believe you morbid-minded people are developing a sense of humor," said Matsu-kuo, "but I'm not sure I care for the style too much."

The flare of the rocket grew brighter as the decelerating ship approached the small cluster of rocks. At last the ship itself took form, shining in the eternal blaze of the sun. When the whiteness of the rocket blaze died suddenly, the ship was only a few dozen yards from Houston's own asteroid.

And then a mental voice

came into the minds of the six prisoners.

"How do you feel, Controllers?"

Only Houston recognized that thought-pattern, but his recognition was transmitted instantly to the others.

"*Reinhardt!*"

Hermann Reinhardt, Division Chief of the Psychodeviant Police, the one man most hated and feared by Controllers, was himself a telepath!

"Naturally," said Reinhardt. "Someone had to take control of the situation. I was the only one who was in a position to do it."

His thoughts were neither hard nor cold; it was almost as if he were one of them—except for one thing. Only the words of his thoughts came through; there were none of the fringe thoughts that the six were used to in each other.

"That's true," thought Reinhardt. "You see, we have been at this a good deal longer than you." Then he directed his thoughts at members of the crew of the spaceship, but they could still be heard by the six prisoners. "All right, men, get those people off those rocks. We have to make room for another batch."

The airlock in the side of the ship opened, and a dozen spacesuited men leaped out.

The propulsion units in their hands guided them toward the prison asteroids.

"Give them all anaesthetic except Sager and Pederson," Reinhardt ordered. "They won't need it." Then, with a note of apology, "I'm sorry we'll have to anaesthetize you, but you've been in one position so long that moving you will be rather painful. We have to get you to a hospital quickly."

The minds of the six prisoners were frantically pounding questions at the PD chief, but he gave them no answer. "No; wait until you're better."

The spacesuited rescuers went to the "back" of each asteroid and injected sleep-gas into the oxygen line that ran from the tank to the spacesuit of the prisoner.

Houston could smell the sweetish, pungent odor in his helmet. Just before he blacked out, he hurled one last accusing thought at Reinhardt.

"*You're the one who's been framing Controllers!*"

"Naturally, Houston," came the answer. "How else could I get you out here?"

Houston woke up in a hospital bed. He was weak and hungry, but he felt no pain. As he came up from unconsciousness, he felt a fully

awake mind guiding him out of the darkness.

It was Reinhardt.

"You're a tough man, Houston," he said mentally. "The others won't wake up for a while yet."

He was sitting on a chair next to the bed, holding a smouldering cigarette in one hand. He looked strange, somehow, and it took Houston a moment to realize that there was a smile on that broad, normally expressionless face.

Houston focussed his eyes on the man's face. "I want an explanation, Reinhardt," he said aloud. "And it better be a damned good one."

"I give you free access to my mind," Reinhardt said. "See for yourself if my method wasn't the best one."

Houston probed. The explanation, if not the best, was better than any Houston could have thought of.

When the hatred of the normal-minded people of Earth had been turned against the Controllers because of the actions of a few megalomaniacs, it had become obvious that legal steps had to be taken to prevent mob violence.

It had been Reinhardt himself who had suggested the Penal method to the UN gov-

ernment. At first, he had simply thought of it as a method to keep the Controllers alive until he could think of something better. But when he had discovered, by accident, what a small group of Controllers, alone in space, could do, he had set up the present machinery.

As soon as a Controller was spotted, a careful frame-up was arranged. Then, when several had been found, they were arrested in quick succession and sent to the asteroids.

Always and invariably, they had done what Houston's group had done—the sane or potentially sane ones had improved themselves tremendously, while the megalomaniacs had lapsed into catatonia.

"Why couldn't it be done on Earth?" Houston asked.

"We tried it," Reinhardt said. "It didn't work. Safe, on Earth, surrounded by Normals, a Controller still feels the hatred around him. He can't open his mind completely. Only the certain knowledge of impending death, and a complete freedom from the hatred of Normals can free the mind."

"And that's why you couldn't be told beforehand; if you knew you were going to be rescued, you wouldn't open up."

Houston nodded. It made sense. "Where are we now?" he asked.

"Antarctica," said Reinhardt. "We've built an outpost here—almost self-sufficient. When you're in better shape physically, I'll show you around."

"Do you mean that everyone who's been arrested is here, in Antarctica?"

Reinhardt laughed. "No, not by a long shot. Most of us are back out in civilization, searching for new, undiscovered Controllers, so that we can frame them. And, of course, some of us—the insane ones—have died. They will themselves to die when the going gets too tough."

"Searching for recruits? Then the Group that Dorrine was working for was—"

Reinhardt shook his head. "No. They were going about it the wrong way, just as you thought. We picked up the whole lot of them last week; they're occupying the asteroids now."

"What do you do with the insane catatonics?"

"Put them under hibernene and keep them alive. We hope, someday, to figure out a method of restoring their sanity. Until then, let them sleep."

Houston narrowed his eyes. "How long have you known I was a Controller, Reinhardt?"

The Prussian smiled. "Ever since you first tried to probe me. Fortunately, my training enabled me to put up a shield that you couldn't penetrate; I seemed like a Normal to you."

"I kept you on because I knew you'd be useful in cracking Lasser and his gang when the time came. No one else could have done what you did that night."

"Thanks," Houston said sincerely. "What's going to happen now? After I get well, I mean."

"You'll do what the others have done. A little plastic surgery to change your face a trifle, a little record-juggling to give you a new identity, and you'll be ready to go back to work for the PD Police."

"If anyone recognizes you, it's easy to take over their minds just long enough to make them forget. We allow that much Controlling."

"And then what?" Houston wanted to know. "What happens in the long run?"

"In a way," said Reinhardt, "your friend Sager was right. The Controllers will eventually become the rulers of Earth. But not by force or trickery. We must just bide our time. More and more of us

are being born all the time; the Normals are becoming fewer and fewer. Within a century, we will outnumber them—we will be the Normals, not they.

"But they'll never know what's going on. The last Normal will die without ever knowing that he is in a world of telepaths.

"By the time that comes about, we'll no longer need the Penal Cluster, since Controllers will be born into a world where there is no fear of non-telepaths."

"I wonder," Houston mused, "I wonder how this ability came about. Why is the human race acquiring telepathy so suddenly?"

Reinhardt shrugged. "I can give you many explanations—atomic radiation, cosmic rays, natural evolution. But none of them really explains it. They just make it easier to live with.

"I think something similar must have happened a few hundred thousand years ago, when Cro-Magnon man, our own ancestors, first developed true intelligence instead of the pseudo-intelligence, the highly developed instincts, of the

Neanderthals and other para-men.

"Within a relatively short time, the para-men had died out, leaving the Cro-Magnon, with his true intelligence, to rule Earth."

Reinhardt stood up. "Why is it happening? We don't know. Maybe we never will know, any more than we know why Man developed intelligence." He shrugged. "Perhaps the only explanation we'll ever have is to call it the Will of God and let it go at that."

"Maybe that's the best explanation, after all," Houston said.

"Perhaps. Who knows?" Reinhardt crushed his cigarette out in a tray. "I'll go now, and let you get some rest. And don't worry; I'll have you notified as soon as Dorrine starts to come out of it."

"Thanks—Chief," Houston said as Reinhardt left the room.

David Houston lay back in his bed and closed his eyes.

For the first time in his life, he felt completely at peace—with himself, and with the Universe.

THE END

POSTMARK GANYMED

By
**ROBERT
SILVERBERG**

Consider the poor mailman of the future. To "sleet and snow and dead of night"—things that must not keep him from his appointed rounds—will be added, sub-zero void, meteors, and planets that won't stay put. Maybe he'll decide that for six cents an ounce it just ain't worth it.

I'M washed up," Preston growled bitterly. "They made a postman out of me. Me—a postman!"

He crumpled the assignment memo into a small, hard ball and hurled it at the bristly image of himself in the bar mirror. He hadn't shaved in three days—which was how long it had been since he had been notified of his removal from Space Patrol Service and his transfer to Postal Delivery.

Suddenly, Preston felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked up and saw a man in the trim gray of a Patrolman's uniform.

"What do you want, Dawes?"

"Chief's been looking for you, Preston. It's time for you to get going on your run."

Preston scowled. "Time to go deliver the mail, eh?" He spat. "Don't they have anything better to do with good spacemen than make letter carriers out of them?"

The other man shook his head. "You won't get anywhere grousing about it, Preston. Your papers don't specify which branch you're assigned to, and if they want to make you carry the mail—that's it." His voice became suddenly gentle. "Come on, Pres. One last drink, and then let's go. You don't want to spoil a good record, do you?"

"No," Preston said reflectively. He gulped his drink and stood up. "Okay. I'm ready. Neither snow nor rain shall stay me from my ap-

pointed rounds, or however the damned thing goes."

"That's a smart attitude, Preston. Come on—I'll walk you over to Administration."

Savagely, Preston ripped away the hand that the other had put around his shoulders. "I can get there myself. At least give me credit for that!"

"Okay," Dawes said, shrugging. "Well — good luck, Preston."

"Yeah. Thanks. Thanks real lots."

He pushed his way past the man in Space Grays and shouldered past a couple of barflies as he left. He pushed open the door of the bar and stood outside for a moment.

It was near midnight, and the sky over Nome Spaceport was bright with stars. Preston's trained eye picked out Mars, Jupiter, Uranus. There they were—waiting. But he would spend the rest of his days ferrying letters on the Ganymede run.

He sucked in the cold night air of summertime Alaska and squared his shoulders.

Two hours later, Preston sat at the controls of a one-man patrol ship just as he had in the old days. Only the control panel was bare where the firing studs for the heavy

guns was found in regular patrol ships. And in the cargo hold instead of crates of spare ammo there were three bulging sacks of mail destined for the colony on Ganymede.

Slight difference, Preston thought, as he set up his blasting pattern.

"Okay, Preston" came the voice from the tower. "You've got clearance."

"Cheers," Preston said, and yanked the blast-lever. The ship jolted upward, and for a second he felt a little of the old thrill—until he remembered.

He took the ship out in space, saw the blackness in the viewplate. The radio crackled.

"Come in, Postal Ship. Come in, Postal Ship."

"I'm in. What do you want?"

"We're your convoy," a hard voice said. "Patrol Ship 08756, Lieutenant Mellors, above you. Down at three o'clock, Patrol Ship 10732, Lieutenant Gunderson. We'll take you through the Pirate Belt."

Preston felt his face go hot with shame. Mellors! Gunderson! They would stick two of his old sidekicks on the job of guarding him.

"Please acknowledge," Mellors said.



"The iceworms were not expecting any mail—just the mailman."

Preston paused. Then: "Postal Ship 1872, Lieutenant Preston aboard. I acknowledge message."

There was a stunned silence. "Preston? Hal Preston?"

"The one and only," Preston said.

"What are you doing on a Postal ship?" Mellors asked.

"Why don't you ask the Chief that? He's the one who yanked me out of the Patrol and put me here."

"Can you beat that?" Gunderson asked incredulously. "Hal Preston, on a Postal ship."

"Yaeh. Incredible, isn't it?" Preston asked bitterly. "You can't believe your ears. Well, you better believe it, because here I am."

"Must be some clerical error," Gunderson said.

"Let's change the subject," Preston snapped.

They were silent for a few moments, as the three ships—two armed, one loaded with mail for Ganymede—streaked outward away from Earth. Manipulating his controls with the ease of long experience, Preston guided the ship smoothly toward the gleaming bulk of far-off Jupiter. Even at this distance, he could see five or six bright pips surrounding the huge

planet. There was Callisto, and—ah—there was Ganymede.

He made computations, checked his controls, figured orbits. Anything to keep from having to talk to his two ex-Patrolmates or from having to think about the humiliating job he was on. Anything to—

"Pirates! Moving up at two o'clock!"

Preston came awake. He picked off the location of the pirate ships—there were two of them, coming up out of the asteroid belt. Small, deadly, compact, they orbited toward him.

He pounded the instrument panel in impotent rage, looking for the guns that weren't there.

"Don't worry, Pres," came Mellors' voice. "We'll take care of them for you."

"Thanks," Preston said bitterly. He watched as the pirate ships approached, longing to trade places with the men in the Patrol ships above and below him.

Suddenly a bright spear of flame lashed out across space and the hull of Gunderson's ship glowed cherry red. "I'm oaky," Gunderson reported immediately. "Screens took the charge."

Preston gripped his con-

trols and threw the ship into a plunging dive that dropped it back behind the protection of both Patrol ships. He saw Gunderson and Mellors converge on one of the pirates. Two blue beams licked out, and the pirate ship exploded.

But then the second pirate swooped down in an unexpected dive. "Look out!" Preston yelled helplessly—but it was too late. Beams ripped into the hull of Melors' ship, and a dark fissure line opened down the side of the ship. Preston smashed his hand against the control panel. Better to die in an honest dogfight than to live this way!

It was one against one, now—Gunderson against the pirate. Preston dropped back again to take advantage of the Patrol ship's protection.

"I'm going to try a diversionary tactic," Gunderson said on untappable tight-beam. "Get ready to cut under and streak for Ganymede with all you got."

"Check."

Preston watched as the tactic got under way. Gunderson's ship traveled in a long, looping spiral that drew the pirate into the upper quadrant of space. His path free, Preston guided his ship under the other two and toward un-

obstructed freedom. As he looked back, he saw Gunderson steaming for the pirate on a sure collision orbit.

He turned away. The score was two Patrolmen dead, two ships wrecked—but the mails would get through.

Shaking his head, Preston leaned forward over his control board and headed on toward Ganymede.

The blue-white, frozen moon hung beneath him. Preston snapped on the radio.

"Ganymede Colony? Come in, please. This is your Postal Ship." The words tasted sour in his mouth.

There was silence for a second. "Come in, Ganymede," Preston repeated impatiently—and then the sound of a distress signal cut across his audio pickup.

It was coming on wide beam from the satellite below—and they had cut out all receiving facilities in an attempt to step up their transmitter. Preston reached for the wide-beam stud, pressed it.

"Okay, I pick up your signal, Ganymede. Come in, now!"

"This is Ganymede," a tense voice said. "We've got trouble down here. Who are you?"

"Mail ship," Preston said. "From Earth. What's going on?"

There was the sound of voices whispering somewhere near the microphone. Finally: "Hello, Mail Ship?"

"Yeah?"

"You're going to have to turn back to Earth, fellow. You can't land here. It's rough on us, missing a mail trip, but—"

Preston said impatiently, "Why can't I land? What the devil's going on down there?"

"We've been invaded," the tired voice said. "The colony's been completely surrounded by iceworms."

"Iceworms?"

"The local native life," the colonist explained. "They're about thirty feet long, a foot wide, and mostly mouth. There's a ring of them about a hundred yards wide surrounding the Dome. They can't get in and we can't get out—and we can't figure out any possible approach for you."

"Pretty," Preston said. "But why didn't the things bother you while you were building your Dome?"

"Apparently they have a very long hibernation-cycle. We've only been here two years, you know. The ice-worms must all have been

asleep when we came. But they came swarming out of the ice by the hundreds last month."

"How come Earth doesn't know?"

"The antenna for our long-range transmitter was outside the Dome. One of the worms came by and chewed the antenna right off. All we've got left is this short-range thing we're using and it's no good more than ten thousand miles from here. You're the first one who's been this close since it happened."

"I get it." Preston closed his eyes for a second, trying to think things out.

The Colony was under blockade by hostile alien life, thereby making it impossible for him to deliver the mail. Okay. If he'd been a regular member of the Postal Service, he'd have given it up as a bad job and gone back to Earth to report the difficulty.

But I'm not going back. I'll be the best damned mailman they've got.

"Give me a landing orbit anyway, Ganymede."

"But you can't come down! How will you leave your ship?"

"Don't worry about that," Preston said calmly,

"We have to worry! We don't dare open the Dome, with those creatures outside. You can't come down, Postal Ship."

"You want your mail or don't you?"

The colonist paused. "Well—"

"Okay, then," Preston said. "Shut up and give me landing coordinates!"

There was a pause, and then the figures started coming over. Preston jotted them down on a scratch-pad.

"Okay, I've got them. Now sit tight and wait." He glanced contemptuously at the three mail-pouches behind him, grinned, and started setting up the orbit.

Mailman, am I? I'll show them!

He brought the Postal Ship down with all the skill of his years in the Patrol, spiralling in around the big satellite of Jupiter as cautiously and as precisely as if he were zeroing in on a pirate lair in the asteroid belt. In its own way, this was as dangerous, perhaps even more so.

Preston guided the ship into an ever-narrowing orbit, which he stabilized about a hundred miles over the surface of Ganymede. As his ship swung around the

moon's poles in its tight orbit, he began to figure some fuel computations.

His scratch-pad began to fill with notations.

Fuel storage—

Escape velocity—

Margin of error—

Safety factor—

Finally he looked up. He had computed exactly how much spare fuel he had, how much he could afford to waste. It was a small figure—too small, perhaps.

He turned to the radio. "Ganymede?"

"Where are you, Postal Ship?"

"I'm in a tight orbit about a hundred miles up," Preston said. "Give me the figures on the circumference of your Dome, Ganymede?"

"Seven miles," the colonist said. "What are you planning to do?"

Preston didn't answer. He broke contact and scribbled some more figures. Seven miles of iceworms, eh? That was too much to handle. He had planned on dropping flaming fuel on them and burning them out, but he couldn't do it that way.

He'd have to try a different tactic.

Down below, he could see the blue-white ammonia ice that was the frozen atmos-

phere of Ganymede. Shimmering gently amid the whiteness was the transparent yellow of the Dome beneath whose curved walls lived the Ganymede Colony. Even forewarned, Preston shuddered. Surrounding the Dome was a living, writhing belt of giant worms.

"Lovely," he said. "Just lovely."

Getting up, he clambered over the mail sacks and headed toward the rear of the ship, hunting for the auxiliary fuel tanks.

Working rapidly, he lugged one out and strapped it into an empty gun turret, making sure he could get it loose again when he'd need it.

He wiped away sweat and checked the angle at which the fuel-tank would face the ground when he came down for a landing. Satisfied, he knocked a hole in the side of the fuel-tank.

"Okay, Ganymede," he radioed. "I'm coming down."

He blasted loose from the tight orbit and rocked the ship down on manual. The forbidding surface of Ganymede grew closer and closer. Now he could see the ice-worms plainly.

Hideous, thick creatures, lying coiled in masses around the Dome. Preston checked

his spacesuit, making sure it was sealed. The instruments told him he was a bare ten miles above Ganymede now. One more swing around the poles would do it.

He peered out as the Dome came below and once again snapped on the radio.

"I'm going to come down and burn a path through those worms of yours. Watch me carefully, and jump to it when you see me land. I want that airlock open, or else."

"But—"

"No buts!"

He was right overhead now. Just one ordinary-type gun would solve the whole problem, he thought. But Postal Ships didn't get guns. They weren't supposed to need them.

He centered the ship as well as he could on the Dome below and threw it into automatic pilot. Jumping from the control panel, he ran back toward gun turret and slammed shut the plexilite screen. Its outer wall opened and the fuel tank went tumbling outward and down. He returned to his control-panel seat and looked at the viewscreen. He smiled.

The fuel-tank was lying near the Dome—right in the middle of the nest of ice-

worms. The fuel was leaking from the puncture.

The iceworms writhed in from all sides.

"Now!" Preston said grimly.

The ship roared down, jets blasting. The fire licked out, heated the ground, melted snow—ignited the fuel tank! A gigantic flame blazed up, reflected harshly off the snows of Ganymede.

And the mindless iceworms came, marching toward the fire, being consumed, as still others devoured the bodies of the dead and dying.

Preston looked away and concentrated on the business of finding a place to land the ship.

The holocaust still raged as he leaped down from the catwalk of the ship, clutching one of the heavy mail sacks, and struggled through the melting snows to the airlock.

He grinned. The airlock was open.

Arms grabbed him, pulled him through. Someone opened his helmet.

"Great job, Postman!"

"There are two more mailsacks," Preston said. "Get men out after them."

The man in charge gestured to two young colonists,

who donned spacesuits and dashed through the airlock. Preston watched as they raced to the ship, climbed in, and returned a few moments later with the mailsacks.

"You've got it all," Preston said. "I'm checking out. I'll get word to the Patrol to get here and clean up that mess for you."

"How can we thank you?" the official-looking man asked.

"No need to," Preston said casually. "I had to get that mail down here some way, didn't I?"

He turned away, smiling to himself. Maybe the Chief *had* known what he was doing when he took an experienced Patrol man and dumped him into Postal. Delivering the mail to Ganymede had been more hazardous than fighting off half a dozen space pirates. *I guess I was wrong*, Preston thought. *This is no snap job for old men.*

Preoccupied, he started out through the airlock. The man in charge caught his arm. "Say, we don't even know your name! Here you are a hero, and—"

"Hero? Preston shrugged. "All I did was deliver the mail. It's all in a day's work, you know. The mail's got to get through!"

THE END

THE SUCCESS MACHINE

By HENRY SLESAR

THE Personnelovac winked, chittered, chortled, chuckled, and burped a card into the slot. Colihan picked it up and closed his eyes in prayer.

"Oh, Lord. Let this one be all right!"

He read the card. It was pink.

"Subject #34580. Apt. Rat. 34577. Psych. Clas. 45. Last per.

Vac. An. 3/5/98. Rat. 19. Cur. Rat. 14.

Analysis: Subject demonstrates decreased mechanical coordination. Decrease in work-energy per man-hour. Marked increase in waste-motion due to subject's interest in non-essential activities such as horseracing. Indication of hostility towards superiors.

Mechanical brains are all the rage these days, so General Products just had to have one. But the blamed thing almost put them out of business. Why? It had no tact. It insisted upon telling the truth!

Recommendation: Fire him."

Colihan's legs went weak. He sat down and placed the card in front of him. Then, making sure he was unobserved, he broke a company rule and began to Think.

*Something's wrong, he thought. Something is terribly wrong. Twenty-four pink cards in the last month. Twenty-four out of forty. That's a batting average of —*He tried to figure it out with a pencil, but gave it up as a bad job. *Maybe I'll run it through the Averagovac, he thought. But why bother? It's obvious that it's high. There's obviously SOMETHING WRONG.*

The inter-com beeped.

"Ten o'clock department head meeting, Mr. Colihan."



The steel brain was having more fun than people.

"All right, Miss Blanche."

He rose from his chair and took the pink card with him. He stood before the Action Chute for a moment, tapping the card against his teeth. Then, his back stiffened with a sense of duty, and he slipped the card inside.

The meeting had already begun when Colihan took his appointed place. Grimswitch, the Materielovac operator looked at him quizzically. *Damn your eyes, Grimswitch*, he thought. *It's no crime to be three minutes late. Nothing but a lot of pep talk first five minutes anyway.*

"PEP!" said President Moss at the end of the room. He slammed his little white fist into the palm of his other hand. "It's only a little word. It only has three little letters. P - E - P. Pep!"

Moss, standing at the head of the impressive conference table, leaned forward and eyed them fixedly. "But those three little letters, my friends, spell out a much bigger word. A *much* bigger word for General Products, Incorporated. They spell PROFIT! And if you don't know how *profit* is spelled, it's M - O - N - N - E - Y!"

There was an appreciative laugh from the assembled de-

partment heads. Colihan, however, was still brooding on the parade of pink cards which had been emerging with frightening regularity from his think-machine, and he failed to get the point.

"Naughty, naughty," Grimswitch whispered to him archly. "Boss made a funny. Don't forget to laugh, old boy."

Colihan threw him a sub-zero look.

"Now let's be serious," said the boss. "Because things are serious. Mighty serious. Somewhere, somehow, *somebody's* letting us down!"

The department heads looked uneasily at each other. Only Grimswitch continued to smile vacantly at the little old man up front, drumming his fingers on the glass table top. When the President's machine-gunning glance caught his eyes, Colihan went white. *Does he know about it?* he thought.

"I'm not making accusations," said Moss. "But there is a let-down someplace. Douglas!" he snapped.

Douglas, the Treasurer, did a jack-in-the-box.

"Read the statement," said the President.

"First quarter fiscal year," said Douglas dryly. "Investment capital, \$17,836,975,-

238.96. Assets, \$84,967,442,-
279.55. Liabilities, \$83,964,-
283,774.60. Production costs
are—"

Moss waved his hand impatiently. "The meat, the meat," he said.

Douglas adjusted his glasses. "Total net revenue, \$26,876,924.99."

"COMPARISON!" The President screamed. "Let's have last first quarter, you idiot!"

"Ahem!" Douglas rattled the paper in annoyance. "Last first quarter fiscal year net revenue \$34,955,376.81. Percent decrease—"

"Never mind." The little old man waved the Treasurer to his seat with a weary gesture. His face, so much like somebody's grandmother, looked tragic as he spoke his next words.

"You don't need the Accountovac to tell you the significance of those figures, gentlemen." His voice was soft, with a slight quaver. "We are not making much p - r - o - f - i - t. We are losing m - o - n - e - y. And the point is—what's the reason? There must be *some* reason." His eyes went over them again, and Colihan, feeling like the culprit, slumped in his chair.

"I have a suggestion," said

the President. "Just an idea. Maybe some of us just aren't showing enough p - e - p."

There was a hushed silence.

The boss pushed back his chair and walked over to a cork-lined wall. With a dramatic gesture, he lifted one arm and pointed to the white sign that covered a fourth of it.

"See that?" he asked.
"What does it say?"

The department heads looked dubious.

"Well, what does it say?" repeated Moss.

"ACT!" The department heads cried in chorus.

"Exactly!" said the little old man with a surprising bellow. "ACT! The word that made us a leader. The word that guides our business destiny. The world that built General Products!"

He paced the floor. The chair in the conference room creaked as the department heads stirred to follow him with their eyes.

"ACT is our motto. ACT is our password. ACT is our key to success. And why not? The Brains do the thinking. All of us put together couldn't think so effectively, so perfectly, so honestly as the Brains. They take the orders, designate raw materials,

equipment, manpower. They schedule our work. They analyze our products. They analyze our people."

Colihan trembled.

"There's only one important function left to us. And that's ACT!"

The President bowed his head and walked slowly back to his seat. He sat down, and with great fatigue evident in his voice, he concluded his polemic.

"That's why we must have pep, gentlemen. Pep. Now—how do you spell it?"

"P! E! P!" roared the department heads.

The meeting was over. The department heads filed out.

Colihan's secretary placed the morning mail on his desk. There was a stack of memos at least an inch thick, and the Personnel Manager moaned at the sight of it.

"Production report doesn't look too good," said Miss Blanche, crisply. "Bet we get a flood of aptitude cards from Morgan today. Grimswitch has sent over a couple. That makes eleven from him this month. He really has his problems."

Colihan grunted. *He deserves them*, he thought.

"How did the meeting go?"

"Huh?" Colihan looked up.

"Oh, fine, fine. Boss was in good voice, as usual."

"I think there's an envelope from him in the stack."

"What?" Colihan hoped that his concern wasn't visible. He rifled through the papers hurriedly, and came up with a neat white envelope engraved with the words: OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.

Miss Blanche watched him, frankly curious. "That will be all," he told her curtly.

When she had left, he ripped the envelope open and read the contents. It was in Moss's own cramped handwriting, and it was a request for a three o'clock "man-to-man" talk.

Oh, Lord, he thought. Now it's going to happen.

President Moss was eating an apple.

He ate so greedily that the juice spilled over his chin.

Sitting behind his massive oak desk, chair tilted back, apple juice dappling his whiskers, he looked so small and unformidable, that Colihan took heart.

"Well, Ralph—how goes it?"

He called me Ralph, thought Colihan cheerfully. *He's not such a bad old guy.*

"Don't grow apples like

they used to," the President said. "This hydroponic stuff can't touch the fruit we used to pick. Say, did you ever climb a real apple tree and knock 'em off the branches?"

Colihan blinked. "No, sir."

"Greatest thrill in the world. My father had an orchard in Kennebunkport. Apples by the million. Green apples. Sweet apples. Delicious. Spy. Baldwin." He sighed. "Something's gone out of our way of life, Ralph."

Why, he's just an old dear, thought Colihan. He looked at the boss with new sympathy.

"Funny thing about apples. My father used to keep 'em in barrels down in the basement. He used to say to me, 'Andrew,' he'd say, 'don't never put a sour apple in one of these barrels. 'Cause just one sour apple can spoil the whole derned lot.'" The boss looked at Colihan and took a big noisy bite.

Colihan smiled inanely. Was Moss making some kind of point?

"Well, we can't sit around all day and reminisce, eh, Ralph? Much as I enjoy it. But we got a business to run, don't we?"

"Yes, sir," said the Personnel Manager.

"Mighty big business, too. How's your side of it, Ralph? Old Personnelovac hummin' along nicely?"

"Yes, sir," said Colihan, wondering if he should voice his fears about the Brain.

"Marvelous machine, that. Most marvelous of 'em all, if you ask me. Sizes up a man beautifully. And best of all, it's one hundred percent *honest*. That's a mighty important quality, Ralph."

Colihan was getting worried. The boss's conversation was just a little too folksy for his liking.

"Yes, sir, a mighty fine quality. My father used to say: 'Andrew, an honest man can always look you in the eyes.' "

Colihan stared uncomprehendingly. He realized that Moss had stopped talking, so he looked him squarely in the eyes and said: "He must have been a fine man, your father."

"He was honest," said Moss. "I'll say that for him. He was honest as they come. Did you ever hear of Dimaggio?"

"It sounds familiar—"

"It should. Dimaggio was a legendary figure. He took a lantern and went out into the world looking for an honest man. And do you know some-

thing? He couldn't find one. You know, Ralph, sometimes I feel like Dimaggio."

Colihan gulped.

"And do you know why? Because sometimes I see a thing like *this*—" the boss's hand reached into the desk and came out with a thick bundle of pink cards—"and I wonder if there's an honest man left in the world."

He put the cards in front of Colihan.

"Now, sir," said Moss. "Let's talk a little business. These cards are all pink. That means dismissal, right? That's twenty-four people fired in the last month, is that correct?"

"Yes, sir," said Colihan unhappily.

"And how many cards went through the Personnelovac this month?"

"Forty."

"So that's twenty-four out of forty. A batting average of—" The boss's brow puckered. "Well. Never mind. But that's quite an unusual record, wouldn't you say so?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"So unusual that it would call for immediate ACTION, wouldn't it?" The President's face was now stormy.

"Yes, sir. But I checked the Brain—"

"Did you, Ralph?"

"Yes, sir. And the Main-tainovac said it was perfect. There's nothing wrong with it."

"*Nothing* wrong? You call twenty-four firings out of forty *nothing*?" The old man stood up, still holding the core of his apple.

"Well, I don't understand it either, Mr. Moss." Colihan felt dew on his forehead. "Nothing seems to satisfy the Brain anymore. It seems to develop higher and higher standards, or something. Why, I'm not sure it wouldn't even fire—"

"WHO?" said Moss thunderously. "WHO wouldn't it even fire?"

The thunder hit Colihan squarely. He swallowed hard, and then managed to say:

"Anybody, sir. Me, for instance."

The President's face suddenly relaxed.

"I'm no tyrant, my boy. You know that. I'm just doing a job, that's all."

"Of course, sir—"

"Well, all I want you to do is keep your eye on things. It could be a coincidence of course. That's the *logical* explanation." He narrowed his eyes. "What do you think, Ralph?"

"Me, sir?" said Ralph,

wide-eyed. "I don't think, sir. I ACT, sir!"

"Good boy!" The boss chuckled and clapped his hand on Colihan's shoulder. Moss was momentarily satisfied.

The Personnelovac burped.

Colihan picked up the card with a groan. It was pink.

He walked over to the Action Chute and dropped it inside. As it fluttered down below, Colihan shook his head sadly. "Thirty-one," he said.

He placed the next personnel record into the Information chamber. He flipped the lever, and the Personnelovac, now hot with usage, winked, chittered, chortled, and chuckled with amazing speed. The burp was almost joyful as the card popped out. But Colihan's face was far from joyful as he picked it up.

Pink.

"Thirty-two," he said.

The next card was from Grimswitch's department. It was Subject #52098. The number was familiar. Colihan decided to check the file.

"Sam Gilchrist," he said. "Couldn't be anything wrong with Sam. Why, he's a blinkin' genius!"

Flip. Wink. Chitter. Chortle. Chuckle. BURP!

Pink.

"Poor Sam!" said Colihan.

He fed the other records through quickly.

Pink.

Pink.

PINK.

At the end of the day, Colihan worked laboriously with a blunt-pointed pencil. It took him fifteen minutes for the simple calculation.

"Sixty-seven tests. Twenty-three okay. Forty-four—"

Colihan put his hands to his head. "What am I going to do?"

Grimswitch followed Colihan down the hall as he came out of the boss's office for the third time that week.

"Well!" he said fatuously. "Quite the teacher's pet, these days. Eh, Colihan?"

"Go away, Grimswitch."

"On the carpet, eh? Temper a little short? Don't worry." Grimswitch's beefy hand made unpleasant contact with the Personnel man's shoulder. "Your old friends won't let you down."

"Grimswitch, will you please let me alone?"

"Better watch that think-machine of yours," Grimswitch chuckled. "Might fire you next, old boy."

Colihan was glad when Morgan, the production operator, hailed Grimswitch away. But as he entered his own of-

fice, Grimswitch's words still troubled him. *Grimswitch*, he thought. *That fat piece of garbage. That big blow-hard. That know-it-all.*

Almost savagely, he picked up the day's personnel cards and flipped through them carelessly.

Grimswitch, that louse, he thought.

Then he had the idea.

If Grimswitch was still chewing the fat with Morgan, then his secretary would be alone—

If he called her and asked for Grimswitch's record—no, better yet, got Miss Blanche to call—

Why not? he thought. After all, I am the Personnel Manager. Sure, it's a little irregular. He IS a department head. But it's my job, isn't it?

Colihan flipped the intercom and proceeded to call Miss Blanche.

His hand shook as he placed Grimswitch's card into the Personnelovac.

The machine, though still heated by the day's activity, seemed to take longer than usual for its chittering, chuckling examination of the pin-holed facts on the record.

Finally, it gave a satisfied

burp and proffered the result to Colihan's eager hand.

"Aha!" cried the personnel man gleefully.

He walked over to his desk, wrote a quick note on his memo pad, and placed both note and card into an envelope. He addressed it to: OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT. Then he dropped it into the Action Chute. When it was out of sight, he rubbed his hands together in happy anticipation.

When Miss Blanche announced that President Moss himself was in Colihan's outer lobby, the Personnel Manager spent a hasty minute in straightening up the paper debris on his desk.

The old man came striding into the room, exhibiting plenty of p-e-p, and he seated himself briskly on Colihan's sofa.

"Sharp eyes, Ralph," he said. "Sharp eyes and a quick wit. This business demands it. That was a sharp notion you had, doing a run-through on Grimswitch. Never trusted that back-slapping fellow."

Colihan looked pleased. "Trying to do a job, sir."

"Put your finger on it," said Moss. "Hit the nail on the head. It's just like my

father said: 'Trees go dead on the top.' Colihan—" The boss leaned forward confidentially. "I've got an assignment for you. Big assignment."

"Yes, sir!" said Colihan eagerly.

"If Grimswitch is a sour apple, maybe *other* department heads are, too. And who knows? IT knows."

Moss pointed a finger at the Personnelovac.

"I'm rounding up all the aptitude records of the department heads. They'll be in your hands in the next couple of days. Feed 'em in! Root 'em out! Spot the deadwood, Colihan! ACT!"

"ACT!" echoed Colihan, his face flushed.

The old man got up and went over to the Brain.

"Marvelous machine," he said. "Honest. That's what I like about it."

As Moss went out the door, Colihan could have sworn he saw the Personnelovac wink. He walked over to it and fingered the lever. It was turned off, all right.

It was an interesting week for Colihan.

Morgan, the production man, was fired.

Grimswitch came up to see the Personnel man and tried

to punch him in the nose. Fortunately, he was a little too drunk, and the blow went wild.

Seegrum, the shipovac operator, was fired.

Douglas, the Treasurer, was permitted to keep his job, but the Personnelovac issued a dire threat if improvement wasn't rapidly forthcoming.

Wilson, the firm's oldest employee, was fired.

In fact, seven out of General Product's twelve department heads were greeted by the ominous pink card.

Colihan, no longer plagued by doubt, felt that life was definitely worth living. He smiled all the time. His memos were snappier than ever. His heels clicked merrily down the office hallways. He had p - e - p.

Then, the most obvious thing in the world happened —and Colihan just hadn't foreseen it.

His record card came up.

"Have you run through the stack yet?" Miss Blanche asked.

"Er—just about." Colihan looked at her guiltily. He pushed his glasses back on the bridge of his nose. "Couple more here," he said.

"Well, we might as well finish up. Mr. Moss would

like to have the schedule completed this afternoon."

"It will be. That's *all*, Miss Blanche."

His secretary shrugged and left. Colihan went to the Personnelovac with the record in his hand. The file number was 630.

"Don't let me down," he told the Brain.

He placed the pin-holed card into the machine and flipped the lever. It winked, chittered, chortled, and chuckled with almost sinister softness. When the card was burped out at the other end, Colihan took it out with his eyes firmly shut.

He walked over to the Action Chute mechanically. His hand hesitated before he dropped it inside. Then he changed his mind, walked back to the desk, and tore the pink card into the smallest possible shreds.

The inter-com beeped.

"Mr. Moss wants you," said his secretary.

"Colihan!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Don't act so innocent, Colihan. Your report isn't complete. It should have been ready by now."

"Yes, sir!"

"You're not ACTING, Colihan. You're stalling!"

"No, sir."

"Then where's *your* Personnelovac report, Colihan? Eh? Where is it?"

Colihan wrung his hands. "Almost ready, sir," he lied. "Just running it through now, sir."

"Speed it up. Speed it up! Time's a'wastin', boy. You're not *afraid*, are you, Colihan?"

"No, sir."

"Then let's have it. No more delay! Bull by the horns! Expect it in an hour, Colihan. Understand?"

"Yes, sir!"

The boss clicked off. Colihan groaned audibly.

"What can I do?" he said to himself. He went to the Brain and shook his fist helplessly at it. "Damn you!" he cursed.

He had to think. He had to THINK!

It was an effort. He jerked about in his swivel chair like a hooked fish. He beat his hands on the desk top. He paced the floor and tore at the roots of his hair. Finally, exhausted, he gave up and flopped ungracefully on the office sofa, abandoning himself to the inevitable.

At that precise moment, the mind being the perverse organ it is, he was struck by an inspiration.

The Maintainovac bore an

uneasy resemblance to Colihan's own think-machine. Wilson, the oldest employee of General Products, had been the operator of the maintenance Brain. He had been a nice old duffer, Wilson, always ready to do Colihan a favor. Now that he had been swept out in Colihan's own purge, the Personnel Manager had to deal with a new man named Lockwood.

Lockwood wasn't so easy to deal with.

"Stay out of my files, mister," he said.

Colihan tried to look superior. "I'm the senior around here, Lockwood. Let's not forget that."

"Them files is my responsibility." Lockwood, a burly young man, stationed himself between Colihan and the file case.

"I want to check something. I need the service records of my Brain."

"Where's your Requisition Paper?"

"I haven't got time for that," said Colihan truthfully. "I need it now, you fool."

Lockwood set his face like a Rushmore memorial.

"Be a good fellow, can't you?" Colihan quickly saw that wheedling wasn't the answer.

"All right," he said, starting for the door. "I just wanted to help you."

He opened the door just a crack. Sure enough, Lockwood responded.

"How do you mean, help me?"

"Didn't you know?" Colihan turned to face him. "I'm running through an aptitude check on the Personnelovac. Special department head check. Mr. Moss's orders."

"So?"

"I was just getting around to yours. But I figured I'd better make sure the Brain was functioning properly." He grew confidential. "You know, that darned machine has been firing *everyone* lately."

A little rockslide began on Lockwood's stoney face.

"Well . . ." he said. "If that's the case—"

"I knew you'd understand," said Colihan very smoothly.

Eagerly, the Personnel Manager collated the records of the Personnelovac. They were far more complex than any employee record, and it took Colihan the better part of an hour.

Any moment he expected to hear the President's angry voice over the inter-com. His

anxiety made him fumble, but at last, the job was done.

He slipped the record, marked by a galaxy of pinholes, into the Brain.

"Now we'll see," he said grimly. "Now we'll find out what's eating this monster."

He flipped the switch.

The Personnelovac winked.

It was several minutes before it digested the information in its chamber. Then it chittered.

It chortled.

It chuckled.

Colihan held his breath until the BURP came.

The card appeared. It read:

*"Subject #PV8. Mech. Rat.
9987. Mem. Rat. 9995. Last
Per. Vac.*

An. None. Cur. Rat. 100.

Analysis: Subject operating at maximum efficiency. Equipped to perform at peak level. Is completely honest and does not exhibit bias, prejudice, or sentiment in establishing personnel evaluations. Cumulative increase in mnemonic ability. Analytic ability improving."

Colihan walked slowly over to the Action Chute as he finished reading the card.

"However," it read, *"because of mechanistic approach to humanistic evaluation, subject displays inabil-*

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ity to incorporate human equation in analytical computation, resulting in technically accurate but humanistically incorrect deductions.

Recommendation: Fire him.

Colihan dropped the pink card into the chute. In half an hour, the Action wheels of General Products concluded their work, and the Personnelovac had winked for the last time.

THE END

THE GLASS BRAIN

By HARLAN ELLISON

We've read a great deal in the last few years about the terrible art of brainwashing. But the current mind-scrubbers are amateurs. Before too long they will be able to go into your ego and haul out things you knew before you were born!

THEY brought his son in to see his degradation after the forty-eighth day. They brought in the young boy with the putty-colored face and the glinting eyes, and took him to the specially-constructed cell over the heating coils. They lifted him before they entered the cell, so that he might look through the view slit at his father.

The boy put his dark green eyes to the slot and stared through. At first it was completely black, with no gradation of shadow, then the darkness penetrated behind his sight, and he saw the cell was padded with invulneraplas padding, the floor was the same, and the ceiling was twelve feet high; no window and no chink in the wall pads allowed light to filter through

the inner dusk. The room was bare, without table or chair or bunk or toilet. Totally bare, and insufferably hot.

The boy's eyes traveled across the room to the far corner. Somehow, with the sixth sense all imprisoned men develop, his father had pressed himself up against the one wall that faced the cool outside. The one wall that separated him from the world outside the prison.

The gaunt, tired man was pressed close along the wall, lying on the pads too firm for rest, too resilient for braining himself.

The man's face was drawn down and in, as though a drawstring had been wound round his neck, tightening, producing wrinkles and a

laxness of expression. His eyes were mildewed pits, and his breathing was labored. Sweat beaded out on his face, and he licked cracked, black lips with a dark and swollen edge of tongue.

"How long has he been here, Sires?" the boy asked, indicating he should be lowered.

The three tall, sturdy men in dark olive-drab uniforms watched the boy intently. "Forty-eight days," the tallest of the three replied.

The boy pulled down the jacket of his own olive-drab uniform with an abrupt movement, nodded his head to the side in consideration of the time. "And he has said nothing, Sires?"

"Nothing. Not a word. We have used the rack, the thumb screws, the pit, the fire, the oscilatrex, the dreamspan and the roentgen bath. Nothing has worked. Your father is a remarkable man." The tall man's voice was bitter and annoyed.

The boy smiled grimly. "Nothing more than a high pain and torture threshold," he answered, his voice attaining a strange tone, as though he were repeating by rote.

The three men grinned at one another. "You have learn-

ed your lessons in the Wasps well, Peter Vaszovek. You are truly a child of the Superior Race." He grinned back at them, restrainedly, as the tallest of the three clapped him on the shoulder familiarly. "You have overcome your birth."

"But," he added, raising a finger, "that does not help us with the problem at hand. Your father was the last man to work on the energy probe before our liberating forces entered your country, Peter. His work is something we must trace back, and force him to reveal. He has been stubborn. We were forced to use torture."

The boy drew himself more erect. "No explanations are necessary, Sires. I fully approve of the use of strong measures. When an enemy of the Race is reluctant to disclose needed information, *any* methods are permissible. That was the first thing we learned in the School."

The three men smiled at one another, and the middle-sized one nudged the shortest one, nodding his head at the boy with pride.

"They teach them in the School, eh!"

The tallest one put his arm around the boy's shoulder. "You will see what you can



Brutality had become a fine art—sadism, a talent.

do, won't you, my boy? So we will make one last effort to obtain his information before we are forced to use the drain. You will try, won't you, Peter?"

As the door slid into the wall a blast of hot air smashed them in the face, and the boy drew back an inch.

"Go, Peter, my Wasp," the tall Raceist said, nudging the boy forward. "See what you can get from the traitor."

The boy whipped a sharp salute and entered the room . . .

The man on the floor looked up as the cell door slid back into place. The boy stood near the door, staring into the darkness till his eyes had grown accustomed to the black.

The man raised up painfully on one hand, stared back, his face contorted by the effort.

He smiled and slumped back. "Peter," the man let the word crumble from his lips. "My son . . . what are . . . you . . . doing here . . . ?"

The boy walked slowly to the man, crouched in approved Wasp fashion, and stared down coolly at his father. His hand went to his head, removing the service cap, wiping away perspira-

tion. The room was like an oven.

"Father," the boy said stiffly, "they have asked me to speak to you."

The parched man gasped, "You needn't worry, I'll n-never . . . tell them anything."

The boy slapped his thigh with the cap in exasperation. "That's what I wanted to tell you father. You *must* tell them. You mustn't hold back any secrets the glorious Superior Race can use!"

The father raised up again, the deep swollen pockets that were his eyes staring straight at the boy. He let his gaze wander down from the antagonistic face to the weak chin, the olive drab uniform, the haughty bearing, the ruthless glint to the eyes.

He slumped back once more, and his words were slightly stronger, but if that, they were completely shot with futility. "So they've done it. They've made you into . . . into one of their acceptable little smash-stepping, arrogant, Raceist bullies. When they came to my home and took you to the Wasp camp, your mother cried, Peter. She cried to see a boy so young being forced to learn hatred and brutality.

"She doesn't cry any more,

Peter. They came for her a day before they took me away. She's dead now, my son. They tell . . . me . . . your mother is dead."

The boy licked his heavy lips, stood more straightly at attention. "All that is common, foolish sentiment, not to be put up with by members of the Superior Race . . . and those they *protect*," he added, slapping his chest in indication.

"Now will you tell me the secret of the energy probe, so that our glorious Race can go on to higher achievements?"

The old, old, almost-dead eyes of the man on the floor bore up at the son across the barrier. "Peter, I can never, never tell them. You must realize my boy, that these men are ruthless, and evil and . . ."

The boy's face contorted in rage, and his booted foot lashed out, catching the man heavily in the side. The man rolled with the kick, and slumped painfully back to his former position.

His next words were slow in coming, and a terrible anguish swept across his features. "What have they done to you, my son? What have they done to you . . .?"

He fell back unconscious, and the boy kicked again sev-

eral times, trying to raise him. Futilely.

Finally the boy knelt down beside the prostrate man, and spoke into his unhearing ear.

"Listen to me Paul Vaszovek. I had to overcome the stigma of being your son. I had to work hard to get where I am in the Wasps. They predict a fine career in the War Service, but I will not allow you and your filthy, ridiculous minority ideals to ruin my life.

"I will get the secret from you where they failed. I will allow them to use the drain on me . . . even if it kills you . . . my father!" He spat the final words, slamming his fist into the side of the man's head.

Then he got to his feet, yanked down the jacket of his olive-drab Wasp uniform, and turned toward the door.

"Open for me! I have decided to go to the drain!"

Quickly, the door slid into the wall.

The experimental lab was a huge place, filled by gigantic machines. Pillar-thick coils and tubes snaked up to reservoir tanks set in the ceiling. Banks of switches, consoles, button boards, and other directional equipment were set in the wall, so that the deep

yellow paint could be seen in only a few places. Around the room oscilloscopes and transformers, generators and counters sat bedded down. And directly in the middle of the experimental lab was one machine that dwarfed all the others. The drain.

It rose like a pillar in the center, thick and round and coolly glistening its aluminum sides in the dull crackle-gray surroundings of the room. Its pillar rose to the ceiling, where it disappeared inside a large round tank fastened to the ceiling itself. On the pillar two operating table-like affairs projected out on adjustable arms. Wires and sockets and coils were fastened to these tables in a bewildering array, and near the top of the table, near the head, a metallic cap was attached by means of a telescoping rod, so it could fit to the skull of any size person.

These helmets had plugs protruding from them, and they shone as brightly as the pillar itself.

Peter stared at the machine as he entered the room, and knew, somehow, that this monstrous piece of equipment was the one they would use on him and his—he hesitated to use the nauseating word—his father.

"Can you tell me, Sire, what the drain really is, what it does?" the boy asked the tall Raceist with the cool eyes. "That is, if it does not defy military security, Sire."

The Raceist smiled down at the boy, and there was the feral gleam of the crocodile in his eyes. "Certainly, my boy," he replied.

Peter remembered the way his father had said "my boy" and now the way this strong, upthrust War man had said it. The sickly sentimentality in the old man's voice, the proud, fierce indifference in this Sire's voice. He shuddered inside to think that Paul Vaszovek *was* his father.

That had held him back from Commando School, and the special Assassin's school training program. It had held him back in all the subjects, and it had prejudiced his teachers, made his classmates hate him.

He had gotten where he was by attacking his studies, and proving himself faithful to the Race. Hadn't he spied on the parents of one of his classmates, revealed them as traitors and had them turned over to the Raceist gas-chambers? Hadn't he received the highest ratings in propaganda dissemination, bayonet use

and infiltration? Hadn't he composed the most ringing poem to the glory of the Race?

Yes. But this would be the final thing. This wresting of his father's secret would be the final push that would put him ahead of the others, and prove his loyalty.

The tall uniformed Raceist was speaking. "Several years ago a Viennese named Carl Bolka came up with the genetic theory of 'atom-memories.' That is, every particle of matter stores, and retains its recollections of things that have gone before. So, in effect, if you could reach these memory areas in each atom, you could trace back their history to the creation of the matter itself.

"In general terms, what it meant was that every son had the total sum of the memories of his father. For the genes of the son were those of the father.

"We experimented with this machine for over four years, and now we have finally perfected it. Your father was the last man to see the statistics for the energy probe, and he was originally one of the inventors. We don't know what the energy probe does precisely, save it is the

most devastating tool of war ever invented." The Raceist's eyes shone with a fierce gleam.

"But your father bears the memory of what it is, and how to construct it. Under the drain, we will pull up those memories from him, silently, while on the other table the same 'atom-memories' will be roused in you. We will drag them up in both of you simultaneously, and when we are finished, you will have a full set of your father's recollections and . . ."

The boy continued, his chin forward, his evil little eyes agleam, ". . . and my father will unfortunately be drained dry and dead as a corn husk, is that right, Sire?"

The tall man nodded, and the boy smiled tightly.

The first session was painful. They strapped the father to one table, and the boy to the other, fastening the caps to their heads, and turning the machine on slowly and softly.

"We start at the lowest common denominators," the white-smocked Attendant said, turning a vernier.

The dials leaped up and the hum of power pulsing through the coils brought the boy's eyes to his father's face.

The man was near to death even now. He had been weak, had not been able to stand up to the torture. He was a pig!

Then, before the end of the thought, and the start of another, a sharp stab of lightning coursed through Peter's brain. He screamed, and fell back limply on the table. On the other slab, his father grew rigid, his face straining, his mouth clamping shut, his teeth grinding. Then his eyes rolled up in their sockets, rolled back, and he fell unconscious under the power of the drain.

All that afternoon and into the early evening they lay under the drain, and thoughts poured across, brimmed up, ripped away from their parent atoms, and filled the boy's head as his father remembered.

The father would never speak, and the atoms were incapable of it, but as the father remembered, the son remembered. The father's memories drifted to the top, where he would refuse to speak them, but as they drifted to the top in the boy's mind, he gathered them to relate to his Raceist masters.

The weeks crept by, under the drain.

It was a slow process, and every day Peter remembered a little more of his father's life.

First he saw himself as a lad of six, watching the men march off to war, watching the green cross mothers putting their little flags in the window, indicating how many sons had gone off to the battlefields of Antarctica and Samoa. Seeing the once-green fields—barely green in his memory—now droughted and blasted from low-flying strafe-jets.

Then it was the war years, with himself shoudering the removable barrel of a twenty-thread mortar, hiking across the barren wastes of Cote d'Azur in search of Raceist troops. The whine and crash of a corkscrew shell exploding to his right, the concussion and the scream of his fellow mortarman. The looking up and seeing the blood, the sharp bits of metal and shrapnel protruding from the buddy's forehead and face. The fear and the cold knot in his stomach. The screaming Raceist troops as they poured over the rise, the blue blast of their triple-threads scarring and scorching the sand around him. The hurried assembling of the twenty-thread, and the roar as he

dropped the power cube in the blast chamber.

The explosions, and the high-flung bodies of the Raceist fanatics. The holes and craters dug in the sand, and the abrupt silence of the world. *Oh, why can't we stop?* The thought, and the prayer.

Then it was the years of the conquest, when the infiltrators showed up next door and attacked in the middle of the night. Then the years of the Carrying-Off, when every professor, every scientist, every authority went to the prisons and the Chambers, never to emerge.

The years and the memories slipped up and waited, being viewed in the context of his father's life, till he almost forgot at times, whether he was Peter or Paul Vaszovek, father or son.

Once, he had a strange thought of his own.

During the fifth week under the drain, Peter was called to the Master Sire's office. The man was big, and fleshy, with heavy jowls that hung like butchered meat from a hook. Eyes that were so tiny it seemed for an instant he had no eyes. Skin that was swarthy and oily.

The man puffed Peter into a pneumoseat across from

his own. Peter studied the folds of flesh and the decadent air of the Master Sire who ruled this continent.

"You are Peter, the Vaszovek boy, are you not?"

"That is right, Master Sire."

"You are under the drain, aren't you? You are the brave lad who will win us the secret of the energy probe, aren't you?"

"I hope to be able to discover such a secret, Master Sire."

"And do you know your father is dying?"

"Yes, Master Sire."

"How do you feel about that?"

"My father is a traitor and a coward, a selfish man who is dedicated to evil and the overthrow of the Superior Race, Master Sire. I feel nothing but disgust and hatred for the man."

The fleshy face split in a wet grin. "Fine, fine, fine. And how do you like the idea of possessing such a secret?"

"It is not a secret yet, Master Sire."

"Eh?"

"The memories of the experiments have not yet come to the surface."

"Ah, but when they do, you will turn them over to us, like

a brave little Wasp, won't you, boy?"

"There is no other purpose to my life, Master Sire."

"And have you heard the rumors of promotion?"

"Yes, Master Sire. I cannot lie. I have heard that I am to be promoted to the Kill Squad if this secret is turned over to the Superior Race."

"Good, good, good. You are a very fine lad, Peter. That is all."

So Peter went back to his little room in the prison building, and lay down to rest.

For a long, long time his eyes remained open, fixed on the ceiling. Above him, nine floors, the drain waited.

The weeks grew into six months, and finally, on a stoney day in December, Paul Vaszovek died under the drain. He died as shrunken and as wrinkled as a prune, while in his head thoughts fluttered futilely as butterflies.

On the slab next to him, his son watched the death, and sensed it even as it came. During those six months, the boy's face had altered greatly. Character lines had replaced the shallow cipher of youth. His eyes were green, and glinting, but more than before, with a deeper sensitivity

in them. His face was a harder mask of brutality and outright aggressiveness.

As his father's last spark died, and the body chilled from the inside out, Peter called to the Attendant.

"He is dead, and I have the secret of the energy probe. Take me to the assembled Sires. I must speak to them and the Master Sire."

"Stay where you are, boy, I will assemble them here. This has been in readiness for many months." Then the Attendant was gone, and Peter lay there, watching the cold face of lifelessness beside him. His father had died a traitor, as any Raceist would exclaim.

When the Sires assembled, a sea of olive drab—save for the gold and crimson bulk of the Master Sire—and the rekordiks were humming softly, taking down every word said, Peter asked that the straps be removed.

They were unstuck, and he sat up on the slab, running his hands over his biceps, straining his back, batting his eyelids.

"Well, boy! Well, well, well? Speak up, what is the secret?" The Master Sire was impatient, and impatience was not rewarding in the Master Sire.

"A word, if I may, Master Sire," the boy asked in tones of subservience. "A word about the technique of the drain."

The Master Sire smacked his pudgy lips, and waved a sausaged hand in exasperation. "What have we spawned here, a magpie? Oh, go on, go on, go on, with it!"

"The drain," Peter began, getting off the operating table, "works perfectly. Perhaps too perfectly, Sires.

"It *does* bring up all the memories of my father. It was rightly constructed; that the genes of the father are the genes of the son, and that what the father knows, the son knows. You were correct in assuming what you did. That I would be able to dredge up my father's memory of the energy probe.

"I have that secret now."

The Sires smiled at one another, and they clapped the tallest one—the first one who had brought Peter to the prison six months before—on the back congratulating him, for this surely meant a promotion.

"But . . ." Peter continued, ". . . not only did it dredge up my father's memories, it dredged up his ideals, his beliefs, his feelings, and in his view I attained a new per-

spective on this world, and on the Superior Race.

"You should have counted on that. But you didn't. You see, my father knew only part of the energy probe mechanism consciously. The other, ultimate ramifications of the probe were buried subconsciously, only partially-recognized."

The Sires watched, startled, as the boy spoke in language he could not possibly have gotten from anywhere but his father's memories.

They listened, wary, as he told them they had made a mistake. Who was this upstart son of a dead traitor to tell them, the Superior Race, that they had made a mistake? It would go hard with him after he had revealed the secret of the energy probe.

"And as I attained this new perspective of you, gentlemen," he had omitted the proper word, the "Sires," and they stared open-mouthed at the impertinence of this Wasp. "As I realized you were filthy, killing, butchering pigs who had conquered a world and done nothing for it, I realized I had wasted my youth. That I, too, had become a dirty little butcher, a bullying, nasty offspring of your

School. More flesh of your teaching than of my gray father, who died a man at least."

They started toward him, but he stepped back.

"And as I picked up my father's ideals, swine, I also picked up his subconscious realizations about the energy probe, and to what use it could be put."

They moved on him, their voices rising, but the boy stood his ground, and made a fist with his right hand, the second finger extended straight and rigid.

The first wave of Sires ran into the wall of force. They ran directly into the eating, raging unbelievable fury of the flames and electricity, the sparks and holocaust that erupted from the boy's finger. They stared unbelieving for an instant, before their bodies vomited flames and the flesh warped away from their bodies, before they died in the most horrible way imaginable.

Even as he did it, Peter realized his life was now dedicated. He didn't think he could overthrow a government that had overrun the entire Earth, that had stolen a planet for its own use, but he knew he had to try.

Even as the Master Sire turned for the door, and he sprayed him with live flames, burning the silks and robes from his body, burning the fat, sweating folds of flesh away, Peter knew the truth. That he was one man against this tyrant government, but that his life was his father's life, and he would make up for the years in the Wasps and the School.

As he loosed the full fury of his energy probe—a force that tapped the structure of the universe's furnace—on the drain, watching the gigantic machine melt down to slag, Peter Vaszovek sensed his was not a fight alone.

He had his father to help him, and he knew what his father had been. He knew he could convince the authorities that investigated this debacle that the drain had exploded and killed the others, but he knew his life would be one of struggle.

As he turned his power on the last of the dying Sires, he heard himself whisper, "Die! You destroyers of mankind!"

And strangely, the voice was more suited to an older, dedicated man, than a young boy.

THE END

AMAZING STORIES



THE SPACE CLUB

"I am taking the advice of Dr. Richardson quoted in the June issue, and requesting that you put my name in *The Space Club*." Thus writes 21-year-old Peter S. Mueller of 13617 Chautauqua Avenue, Cleveland 10, Ohio. As an enthusiastic science fiction fan Peter wants to share his exciting reading experiences and his ideas with all other Space Clubbers wherever you may be. In this issue there are a lot of new members for you to meet, so don't waste a minute.

BARBARA J. BILLOWS, 717 E. GARFIELD, #12, PHOENIX, ARIZONA. . . . Barbara tells us that she is comparatively new to the s-f field, but she finds it very interesting. She is 23 years old, has auburn hair and brown eyes. She is also an avid astrology fan.

DICK DOWNEY, JR., 9 NEW ST., AMSTERDAM, N. Y. . . . Dick is a 17-year-old recent high school graduate. He is intensely interested in s-f, particularly UFOs. His hobby is writing. He is 5'10", has dark hair.

ANNE FLEMING, LA CASA BELLA APT., 3421 LARISSA DRIVE #9, LOS ANGELES 26, CALIF. . . . Ann is 21 years old, 4'8" tall, weighs 91 pounds, has brownish red hair and blue eyes. She hopes to hear from other girls her age with interests in the field of music and art.

KENNETH E. FRITSCH, 160 NURNBERGER DR., PITTSBURGH 36, PA. . . . Hoping to hear from other members of The Space Club is 21-year-old Kenneth Fritsch. He is a member

of an ESP Society. He says it has been both entertaining and profitable for him.

JANICE GILLIGAN, 678 DODGE STREET, DUBUQUE, IOWA. . . . 19 years old, Janice has dark brown eyes and brown hair. She is 5'2" tall and weighs 110 pounds. Her interests are music, art, and science fiction. The type of story she likes best is about ESP and UFOs.

A/3c WILLIAM A. GRIMMETT, AF 24 435 49, 1973 AAC SQ. APO 18, BOX 182, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. William is now stationed in Korea. Reading science fiction has helped him to pass many of the lonely hours over there. Through The Space Club he hopes to while away some more of those lonely times.

WILLIAM L. HARRYMAN, 11441 RAINIER AVENUE, SEATTLE 88, WASH. . . . William has been enjoying AMAZING for years, and he is very pleased with this particular new department. He is 30 years old, 6'1"

tall, has brown hair and blue eyes. Other interests include roller skating and hi-fi records.

LYNN A. HICKMANN, 403 N. 11TH, MT. VERNON, ILLINOIS. . . . Mrs. Hickmann is 31 years old. She has two children. Her main hobby is fandom, fanzines and collecting.

CHESTER HUBERT HOEY, C/O GRAND CENTRAL Y. M. C. A., 224 EAST 47TH STREET, NEW YORK 17, N. Y. . . . Chester is 5'7" tall, weighs 158 pounds, has black hair and brown eyes. A British Canadian, he was born in Newfoundland. His hobbies are: astronomy, weather, books and writing stories. He writes about a flying saucer instrument that he has and says that it looks fantastic and is full of music of all kinds.

GARY KINGSBURY, 1228 WEST MARKET ST., WARREN, OHIO. . . . Gary is 14 years old, 5'10" tall, has brown hair and weighs 190 pounds. He wants to correspond with people who are interested in space flight.

KENNETH KLEINMAN, PR-1, SAUCER RESEARCH BUREAU, 296 LONG BEACH ROAD, ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N. Y. . . . Kenneth wants his name added to the many other members of The Space Club. He is interested in s-f and especially in UFOs. His organization is intensely interested in supplying information to any one who desires it. They publish a bulletin that contains reports on sightings plus the ideas and theories about saucers held by many other people.

PAT KNOWLTON, 9211 OTTO ST., DOWNEY, CALIF. . . . 5'7" tall, Pat has blond hair and green eyes. She weighs 128 pounds. At 17 she will graduate from Downey Senior High.

ROBERT N. LAMBECK, 2700 50TH STREET, NORTH, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA. . . . Robert is 14 years old, 5'6" tall, has blue eyes and weighs 120 pounds. His many interests include chess, rockets, science, especial-

ly physics and math, ESP, demonology, pyrotechnics, time travel, parallel worlds, hypnosis.

JANICE LANE, 5637 MAFFITT, ST. LOUIS 12, MISSOURI. . . . Janice is looking for letters from other s-f fans. She is 16 years old, has brown eyes and long brown hair.

SHIRLEY MASTERS, P. O. BOX 225, BUFFALO 5, N. Y. . . . Shirley is 24 years old, 5'2" tall, with blond hair and green-blue eyes. Her hobbies are philosophy, psychology, s-f, and collecting strange facts.

BOB MICHEL, 906 NEW LENOX ROAD, JOLIET, ILLINOIS. . . . Bob says he cannot quench his thirst for the s-f with which we supply him. He is 20 years old, 6' tall, 165 pounds, has black hair and dark brown eyes. Other interests are cartooning, music and books.

BUTCH MANKA, 526 W. RIVERSIDE DR., JEFFERSONVILLE, INDIANA. . . . 16-year old Butch is 6'2" tall. He is enthusiastic about science fiction and fantasy, music and letter writing. He is seeking correspondence with more readers of s-f.

AART MUHLENBRUCH, BRUGSTRAAT 6, ZANDVOORT AAN ZEE, N. H., THE NETHERLANDS. . . . Aart's profession is chemical analysis. At the moment he is serving his last year in the army. His hobbies include books—reading, collecting, printing and even binding them. He also enjoys photography, record collecting and s-f. He hopes to hear from young people his own age.

PVT. 2 FRANK J. NEWSHAM, JR., RA 27551573, H/S CO. 76TH ENGR. BN. COM., APO 301, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. . . . 19-year-old Frank is stationed in Korea. He is 5'11" tall, has blue eyes, light brown hair. His hobbies are s-f, dancing and photography. He is looking forward to meeting other s-f fans through the mail.

CHARLES OWSTON, 301 ELM ST,

EAST MCKEESPORT, PA. . . . At 15, Charles' main interests are astronomy (he has a 3" reflector) s-f, star travel and UFOs.

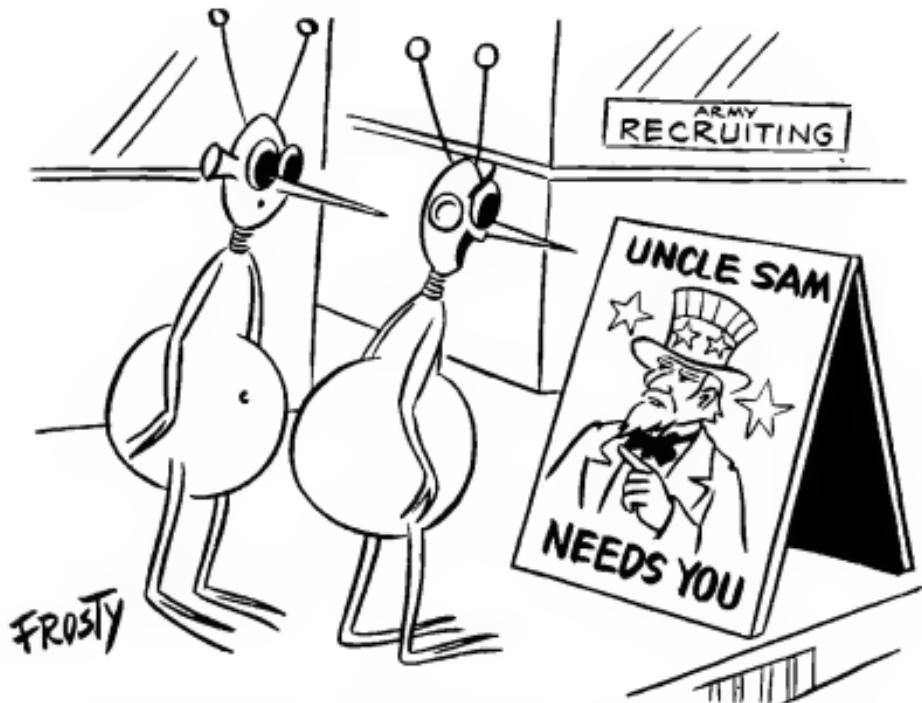
JOY PLEASANTS, 1142 PEABODY AVE, MEMPHIS 4, TENN. . . . A 21-year-old college student, Joy has read s-f since she was ten. She is studying physics and is interested in flying saucer mythology.

DONNIE E. PRICE SK2, USN MCB 5, C/O FPO, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. . . . Donnie is 20 years old and a member of the Naval Service stationed at Kodiak, Alaska. He hails from Southern California. 6' tall he has brown hair and blue eyes, weighs 180 pounds. He has been a science fiction reader for many years.

HELEN ROBIDA, BOX 251, SCOTSTOWN, QUEBEC, CANADA. . . . Helen has become newly acquainted with science fiction and is very enthused about it. She is 5'6" tall, has brown hair and brown eyes. Stamp collecting is also one of her hobbies.

ROBERT STEWART, P. O. BOX 121, LARCHMONT, N. Y. . . . Bob's hobbies are stamp collecting and model plane building. He is 13 years old and has been a science fiction enthusiast for almost two years.

GLORIA SZYSZKO, 901 BILLE ROAD, PARADISE, CALIF. . . . Gloria is an enthusiastic s-f reader and she is anxious to correspond with others like herself.



"It certainly gives a person a warm feeling to be needed."

Directory of Science Fiction Fan Clubs

On the next few pages you will find a list of science fiction fan clubs throughout the world. This has been compiled for us by Jimmy Taurasi and it represents a pretty exhaustive grouping. There are undoubtedly other clubs in existence for which this information is unavailable, however there are certainly enough included here so that active s-f fans who are seeking to join with others in related club activities will be able to pick the one closest to them and get right to work. As a service to fandom we will include revised listings at irregular intervals when changes justify.

UNITED STATES:

NEW ENGLAND SCIENCE & FICTION CRITICS CLUB. Meets every Sunday at 230 Clarendon St. (upper floor), Boston, Mass. Mrs. Alma Hill, secretary; Arthur Milano, treasurer; Bill Desmond, book-buyer. This is a new club with only a half dozen active members at the present time and growing. Contact: *Arthur Milano, 10 California Park, Watertown 72, Mass.*

LOS ANGELES SCIENCE FANTASY SOCIETY, Barney Bernard, director; Forrest J. Ackerman, senior committeeman; Steve Tolliver, junior committeeman and treasurer; George W. Fields, secretary. About 20 active members (500 actual members). Local club with no affiliations. Purpose: To bring together those interested in science-fiction and fantasy for the furtherance of their common interest. Requirement of members: An interest in s-f and fantasy, regardless of age, sex, race or creed. Dues: \$1 initiation fee, 50¢ per meeting attended. For info write: *The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, Freehafer Hall, Prince Rupert Apartments, 1305 West Ingraham St., Los Angeles, Calif.*

20TH CENTURY FANDOM, George W. Fields, president; Ted Johnstone, vice-president; Steve Tolliver, secretary. International and local, with no affiliations. Purpose: To establish a Los Angeles Fan Center, create projects for the good of s-f and fandom. Requirements: An interest in s-f in establishing an L.A. fan center and working on projects. About 9 members at present. Dues \$1 entry fee and 25¢ per meeting. Write to: *George W. Fields, 3607 Pomona Boulevard, Montebello, Calif.*

THE NEW YORK SCIENCE FICTION CIRCLE, comprising an informal group of fans from the Metropolitan area, conducts one meeting the 4th Sunday of each month and an activity or excursion meeting occasionally on the second Sunday. Speakers at regular meeting are drawn from the large number of s-f professionals in the area. Write to: *Esther Schreiber, secretary 155-04 33rd Ave., Flushing 54, N. Y.* Phone: *FLushing 3-7488.*

INDIANA SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION, meets bi-weekly. Ed McNulty, vice-president; Eugene DeWeese, secretary-treasurer. Local with no affiliations. Dues: 50¢ a year. Fifteen members at present. Purpose: S-f discussions and fun, an official fan mag ISFA is issued to members at rare occasions. Write to: *Ed McNulty, 5645 Winthrop, Indianapolis, Indiana.*

W. MASS. SCIENCE-FANTASY SOCIETY, a new club just starting and looking for members. D. A. MacInnes, acting president; Pam MacInnes, acting treasurer; Gertrude Whittum, acting secretary. Aim is to stimulate a greater general interest in the area and thereby to eventually benefit by sharing the companionship of many who find the hobby of reading and collecting science-fantasy a most fascinating avocation. Write to: *Gertrude Whittum, 23 Homer St., Springfield 4, Mass.*

THE TERRANS. The Cleveland Science-Fantasy Association is a social club primarily for the purpose of providing a meeting place for persons interested in s-f fandom as well as imaginative literature; it is not a service organization for s-f readers. Nicholas L. Falasca, president; Frank Andrasovsky, vice-president; Stephen F. Schultheis, secretary-treasurer. A local group with no affiliations. Membership is by application and invitation only. Requirements: an interest in imaginative literature and s-f fandom and the ability to attend meetings and participate in club activity. Dues: \$9 a year, payable quarterly. Approximately 20 members at present. Write to: *Nicholas L. Falasca, 5612 Warwick Ave., Parma 29, Ohio.*

DALLAS FUTURIAN SOCIETY, to inspire group activities in the field of fandom for its members for their enjoyment and the enjoyment of others. Open to anyone interested in s-f. Parliamentarian, Orville W. Mosher; President, Albert Jackson; Secretary, Lyndon Henry. It is a national-local club. Write to: *Lyndon Henry, 5935 Bryan Parkway, Dallas 6, Texas* for further information and for requirements of membership. The club has at present 11 regular members and a total of 29 members of all types. Dues depend on type of member; regular members pay 25¢ a meeting attended.

PROJECT FAN CLUB for the promotion of fandom, fan clubs, and the compiling of information to help those who are starting clubs, those wishing to join a club, and those clubs which need help and/or advice. Essentially it is a research organization into the problems facing those who are starting clubs and/or have formed them. At present Orville W. Mosher heads this; elections are planned for the near future. International organization with no affiliations. About 200 members at the present time. Contact: *Orville W. Mosher, 429 Gilpin Ave., Dallas 11, Texas.*

CINCINNATI FANTASY GROUP. Lou Tabakow, president; Dale Tarr, vice-president; Bea Mahaffy, secretary; Don Ford, treasurer. The purpose is to provide an informal meeting ground for those interested in s-f and fantasy. A local organization with no affiliations. Membership is by invitation only. Good manners, stability and congeniality with the other members are the deciding factors. Approximately 20 members. No dues. This organization has been the hosts to the annual MIDWESTCONS, which are regional affairs. Write to: *Don Ford, Box 19-T, RR#2, Loveland, Ohio. Phone: NOrmandy 4-1973.*

THE ELVES', GNOMES' AND LITTLE MEN'S SCIENCE FICTION, CHOWDER AND MARCHING SOCIETY. Purpose: to encourage and promote science-fiction. J. Ben Stark, chairman; Robert W. Buechley, vice-chairman; Poul Anderson, treasurer; Norman Metcalf, secretary. Write to: *J. Ben Stark, 113 Ardmore Rd., Berkeley 7, Calif.* A local organization with no affiliations. Membership requirement is an interest in s-f. About 40 members. Dues are \$1.00 a year and 25¢ per meeting.

THE FANTASY VETERANS ASSOCIATION formed to help the science-fiction fans in the U.S. Armed Forces in time of war or Police Action. First originated by James V. Taurasi, Sr., and Ray Van Houten in La Harve, France in 1945. Organized in 1948 as a reserve in case of future need. Brought into action in 1950 when the Korean War broke out and kept active until 1955, when it was no longer needed. During the five years, thousands of current science-fiction magazines were sent to science-fiction fans and readers in the Armed Forces of the U.S. overseas at no charge to them. Organization has no dues and operates on donations only and Annual Convention held during these troubled times. Conventions were held in New York City during 1951 through 1955. At present the organization is in mothballs but plans are underway to re-activate it again this Fall on a stand-by basis. Actually this was done for a few months when the Suez Canal war broke out and it looked like the U.S. might be drawn into it. Present Commander is Frank R. Prieto, Jr. and secretary is James

V. Taurasi, Sr. Those caring to join should contact the secretary at
18-36 129th Street, College Point 56, New York.

THE NEW YORK SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY (THE LUNARIANS). Purpose is to bring together mature people who have a genuine interest in, and liking for each other outside their common interest in science fiction. Their main purpose is, of course, to promote s-f fandom and activities. Dues \$2.00 a year, entitling member to attend four meetings in that year. Any meeting thereafter in that year, 50¢ dues per meeting. David A. Kyle, president; Franklin M. Dietz, Jr., treasurer; Belle C. Dietz, secretary, and David A. MacDonald, activities director. A local organization, but constitution states that all members must be active members in the WORLD SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY, INC. Write to: *Belle C. Dietz, 1712 Grand Ave., Bronx 53, N.Y. Telephone: LUDlow 3-5479.*

EASTERN SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION. Allan Howard, director; Franklin M. Sietz, Jr., secretary, and Arthur Sennes, treasurer. Purpose to promote the progress of s-f, fantasy and weird fiction, and to further its enjoyment by the members. Meets the first Sunday of the month at the Slovak Sokol Hall, 358 Morris Ave., Newark, New Jersey. Local organization, with membership coming primarily from the New York, New Jersey area and has no affiliations. About 25 members. Dues 50¢ per month. Contact: *Allan Howard, 101 Fairmount Ave., Newark, New Jersey.*

PHILADELPHIA SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY. Social and educational. William J. Jenkins, president; Peggy Gorden, vice-president; George R. Heap, secretary and Oswald Train, treasurer. Local organization with no affiliations. Membership requirements: Attendance at meetings and payment of dues. Dues \$1 a month (50¢ if under 18). Twenty members. Contact: *George R. Heap, 513 Glen Echo Rd., Philadelphia 19, Pa.*

HYBORIAN LEGION, to provide a meeting place for admirers of Robert E. Howard and Conan. Martin Greenberg, King of Poitain, George R. Heap, Royal Chancellor; Oswald Train, Royal Sorceror; L. Sprague de Camp, Royal Chronicler; Manny Staub, Commander of the Black Dragons. An international organization (U.S., Canada, Cuba and England) with no affiliations. About 100 members. No dues as yet. Membership requirements: Informally expressing interest in the Legion. Contact: *George R. Heap, 513 Glen Echo Rd. Philadelphia 19, Pa.*

FOREIGN:

SCIENCE FICTION CLUB DEUTSCHLANDS (SFCD). Hon. President, Forrest J. Ackerman; chairman, Walter Ernsting; vice-chairman, Hein Bingenheimer; secretary, Heinz Fries; treasurer, Waltraud Ernsting; literary department, Ernest H. Richter; special functions, Julian Parr; press and public relations, Wolf Detlef Rohr; special committee, Heinz-Dieter Reiss, Walter Spiegl, and Walter Wegmann. Write to: *Walter Ernsting, Irschenberg/Obb., Germany*. A national organization with local chapters in fifteen German cities, including Berlin, Bonn, Dusseldorf, Wattencheid, Munich, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Bremen, Hannover, etc., plus a local chapter in Austria, which is not operated independently and one in Switzerland which is. Has no affiliation with any other organization. Six hundred and fifty-six members as of January 1957. Dues: DM 2,25 (about 60¢) per quarter. Official organ: "ANDROmeda."

SFCD SCHWEIZ, same executive as SFCD of Germany, write to: *Walter Wegmann, WALD/ZH, Postfach 88 Switzerland*. A national organization (with local chapters in Zuerich and Basle) and affiliated with the German SFCD. About 60 members as of February 1957. Dues 5,50 sfrs per quarter (includes sub to UTOPIA) Club organ: SIRIUS.

CLUBUTOPIA, Chairman, Pierre Versins. Contact: *Mr. Versins, Primerose 38, Lausanne, Switzerland*. The club is International (but mainly Lausanne) and has no affiliations. About 30 members. Club organ is "Ailleurs."

UCA—UTOPIA CLUB AUSTRIA, President, Edwin Scudla, write to: *Mr. Scudla, Vienna 1, Austria*. The club is a national one with no affiliations. It has almost 100 members as of February 1957. Dues 15 schillings per quarter. Club organ is "Sirius."

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If the Earth is an inch in diameter and the sun, nine feet,

1. the distance to Mercury, the nearest planet, would be 40—400 feet.
2. the distance to Earth, would be 1000—2000 feet.
3. the planet which would have approximately the diameter of the Earth would be Mars—Venus.
4. the distance to Jupiter would be 3000 feet—1 mile.
5. the diameter of Saturn would be 9 inches—2 feet.
6. the distance to Uranus would be less than 2—4 miles.
7. the distance to Neptune would be 60—6 Miles.
8. the distance to Pluto would be 8—100 miles.
9. the distance to Alpha Centaurus, the nearest star, would be 47,000—7000 miles.
10. the distance to Sirius, the brightest star, would be nearly 10,000—100,000 miles.
11. the distance to the "nearby" galaxy, the Greater Magellanic Cloud, is 88,000,000—880,000,000 miles.
12. the distance to the Great Nebula in Andromeda would be 10,000,000,000 miles—1 light year.

THE DESTINY DETECTOR

By DANIEL F. GALOUYE

Suppose you knew beforehand, the shape of things to come? Would you be able to take advantage of your knowledge? This idea has interested fiction writers for years. It interested Dan Galouye and the result is a rattling good story. Perhaps you won't agree with his ending. If not, here's a good chance to write your own.

DESTROY IT!" Laverne had pleaded desperately just before he died. "God! If the wrong man should get hold of the thing!"

Actually, Laverne was going to smash it himself. He had decided to on that last day—just before he walked into the high-tension lead...

The funeral and legal formalities of dissolving the Laverne-Hunter Laboratory followed.

And there I was back in the building—gutted after inventory and auction. On the workbench was—the "Destiny Detector," Laverne had called it long before he began regarding the flux indicator with an air of foreboding detachment.

The door opened and Laverne's daughter entered—

tall and thin and with a loveliness undimmed, even by grief.

A word about Sarah . . . It will suffice to say simply that she was—beautiful. Further descriptive embellishment would be miserably inadequate. At twenty-five, she had been secretary to our research venture for four years. And, although our twenty years' age difference seemed despairingly prohibitive at first, my hopes had increased until, at the time of Laverne's death, I could almost imagine . . .

"I'm glad to see you again, Edmund," she said. "You've been a real friend."

I clasped her hand. "Maurice was more than a partner. He was a—father to me too."

Some of the sadness left her face. "I hope this isn't the



Only a split-second reaction could save him from death.

last we'll see of you. Are you going with Western Research?"

"I'm not sure. If I do, maybe I can fit you in too. Would you like me to try?"

She gestured indecisively. "I don't know what I want to do—" Her eyes fell on the fluxometer. "Are you going to destroy it?"

"He asked me to."

She ran her fingers over the small metal box. "Why did he hate it, Edmund?"

I shrugged. "It wasn't what he wanted. We were looking for something to measure the flow of time. Not the hours and minutes—a clock can do that. But the tangible stream of time-substance . . . You wouldn't find it easy to understand, Sarah."

"And it wouldn't do that?"

"Not quite. You see, time is interwoven with incident. There can't be one without the other. And the indicator detects incident instead of time." I wasn't telling her anything she didn't already know—generally.

"And it shows whether the incident will be good or bad . . . It's weird—like seeing into the future."

"Not if you regard it as a detector of the same time-incident flux that's at the very

root of inspiration, intuition, premonition."

She nodded thoughtfully. "Dad said it not only measures the flux in the vicinity of the nearest person, but also shows whether what he's considering will be beneficial or harmful."

A tall, blond youth drew up suddenly in the doorway. "Ready, Sarah? . . . Oh, I didn't know you were back, Dr. Hunter. How's about trying to place me with Western too?"

I resented Ralph Simmons since the day Laverne had hired him. His never failing to address me in terms one would use only in deference to elders seemed but to illuminate the age difference between Sarah and me.

Thoughtfully, I watched them leave. Then I turned back to the flux indicator . . . Smash it? Only a fool would do that.

That afternoon I turned over the proceeds of the auction to Laverne's attorney and took a cab home, tense with eagerness over the fluxometer.

Relaxing in the back seat, I studied the instrument . . . It was twice the size of a tobacco tin, with a simple arrangement of circuits, con-

trolled by a toggle switch and knob. The latter provided bias to recalibrate the needle to zero should it ever exceed its dial range of plus or minus fifty "destinares"—the Latin term Laverne had applied to the basic time-flux unit.

Closing my eyes, I thought of the destiny detector and Sarah . . . how inseparable they were. With the indicator I would have wealth, power, position, opportunity such as no man had known before. But without Sarah, all would seem useless.

The detector's needle leaped abruptly to minus thirty and held there steadily. Alarmed, I looked ahead, but there was nothing. Yet the indicator was signifying danger.

"Slower!" I called to the driver.

The needle crept below minus thirty-five . . . Potential danger ahead?

Reacting to my questioning thought, the pointer quivered over the positive range, then plunged to minus forty-five as we started up the approach to a viaduct.

"Stop!" I shouted.

The driver pulled up against the railing, letting the station wagon behind us pass. "You sick or somethin'?"

But my eyes were fastened

on the indicator. Slowly, the needle was climbing back to zero.

Then I saw the trailer truck careen down the incline and plow into the station wagon that had just passed us and into the two cars ahead of it. A mass of twisted wreckage, the four vehicles crashed through the guard rail and plunged into the gorge below.

The cab driver swore. "Damn! We would'a been right in that mess! You get a premunichun or somethin'?"

If I'd had any doubts about not destroying the detector, the viaduct incident dispelled them completely. Smash the detector? . . . Even the mere notion was absurd.

But my enthusiasm was tempered by concern over a steady minus two on the fluxometer's dial—a reading indicative of a discomfort, perhaps, but certainly nothing dangerous.

Introspectively, I called up for consideration several things the instrument might be warning me about. But there was no quiver in the needle to show I had guessed the peril. And still the minus two remained—a valid indication of . . . something. But what?

The detector, I found, fit conveniently inside a brief-

case, with a circle cut out of the leather to accommodate its dial. Carrying the instrument concealed in this contrivance, I went to the Citizens' Bank the next day to deposit the receipts from my share of the auction proceeds.

I was standing in the lobby thinking of the fortune that must be in the vaults when the needle lurched to a plus twenty destinares.

Starting, I glanced around. What was the significance of the reading? Did it mean, perhaps, that an attempt to rob the bank at that time would succeed?

The needle plunged.

But it would succeed in the near future?

Plus thirty.

Tomorrow?

Minus twenty.

The next day?

Minus thirty.

Tonight?

Plus forty-five.

I could see the pattern... The detector would lead me past all obstacles to some avenue of entry that would bypass the alarm system. And it would see that I dialed the combination, indicating when I was approaching the right number.

The needle dipped to minus fifteen.

I must plan some more?

Negative.

But what? . . . Tools?

Negative.

I straightened, puzzled.

Maybe . . . a gun?

Full positive.

I shrugged in resignation.

Why should I question the ethics of the destiny detector?

It was above moral censure—like a god in its own right.

And, by following its dictates, I could become godlike too.

I didn't know how the instrument worked. As I said, Laverne had been trying to distill a time-flux out of the warp of space-time-matter that would have measurable properties. We hadn't stopped to figure out the fluxometer's lesser aspects.

But I had hypothesized that basic materiality was quadripartite . . . that in the space-time-matter aspect of reality must also be considered a fourth component—thought.

And the inescapable nature in which time is allied to thought is manifest in the fact that past and future have no existence except in the processes of the mind. Without intellect, there would be only a chaotic present, existing outside of the structure of subjective time.

Conscious mentality, therefore, is but a link of currency

in the chain of subjective time. And it was by virtue of this fact that the detector reacted to questioning thought.

In effect, it *was* seeing into the future. And its practical application was in detecting opportunities—like this thoroughly hidden occasion for a successful bank robbery.

The robbery itself was simple—merely a matter of parking the car and practically walking in.

The detector, with its now luminous dial registering either positive or negative each time I experimentally changed directions, led me around the block, into an alley and to the rear of the bank—where I would have surprised a watchman if the needle hadn't dipped.

He was leaning against the building, blowing smoke into the night sky. Behind him, the bank's service entrance was open.

The indicator assured, with an almost full positive reading, that I had nothing to fear. So, noiselessly, I walked in.

Directed by the plus or minus readings, I was led away from the vault to an inner office, puzzling over the purpose of the detour. But it wouldn't let me leave until I

had found and turned off the switch concealed behind a portrait. I only guessed it was the control to deactivate the time lock.

With the instrument to oversee my manipulation of the safe dial, scarcely a minute was wasted on the combination. Then, with two satchels bulging, I was ready to leave.

At the exit, I drew up and pressed against the wall as the needle fluctuated excitedly over the negative range... The watchman was coming toward me, his spotlight erasing the darkness! Had the fluxometer only led me into a trap?

The needle flicked remonstratively.

Then, despite this complication, everything was still all right?

Positive surge.

Should I walk boldly out?

Alarmingly negative.

Stay where I was?

Minus twenty.

But then what? Frantically, I thought of the gun.

The needle leaped lustily to plus fifty.

Momentarily, I resented the instrument for making jeopardy one of its terms for success. But then the excitement of experimental uncertainty swept over me and I

was eager to test the powerful wisdom of the detector.

Anyway, this was hardly the time to falter. I had to have money. The flux indicator had revealed four hundred thousand would be needed to impress the governor and buy what I wanted.

The watchman's light swung toward me.

I shot him three times.

My new office was pretentious enough to serve as an appropriate front for a nominal investment firm under the name of Edmund Hunter . . . and to impress Sarah.

I had been in the office three days when she came. At the time, as usual, my thoughts were on the destiny detector —Laverne's instrument that was so much like an ancient oracle.

Then suddenly I wondered why I had never considered applying it to my uncertainty over Sarah.

But even as I thought of her, the needle swung to plus thirty destinares. Before the resultant wave of expectancy reached its crest, the indicator quivered suddenly and plunged to minus forty . . . back to plus thirty-five . . . down again to negative twenty.

Up and down it went, a

vacillating blur. Confounded, I phrased a score of frenzied questions . . . Was there danger in our association? Would she reject me? Was there someone else? But nothing quelled the fluctuations of the indicator.

Perplexed, I ignored the instrument. What did it mean? Why couldn't I get an indication on a future involving Sarah? Was this another inconsistency to be put in the undecipherable category, along with the troublesome minus two bias (minus four now, I remembered; it had increased that much in the last three days) ?

I was pacing when Sarah arrived.

"I saw your ad," she said. "I didn't know you were interested in business. Dad used to joke about you not having a business mind."

"I'll do all right, Sarah," I assured, smiling.

She looked past me and saw the destiny detector on the desk. But I felt no regret over her discovery. If she was going to share it with me, she would have to know about it.

Nor did she show any surprise. "That's behind it all, isn't it?"

I nodded frankly.

"I was afraid of that. I knew something had hap-

pened when you didn't go to Western."

She was silent a long while. Then, "It's not right, Edmund."

"Why not?" I demanded caustically. "Other men have advantages — family money, acumen, political influence, experience, inspiration. Are they unfair because they use those tools?"

She merely shook her head disparagingly. "Dad wanted it destroyed."

"But it was half mine."

She shifted uncertainly.

"Don't you see your father was wrong? It *can* benefit more than one person. Suppose the one who had it wanted only to help others?"

Her hand swept doubtfully across the room with its mahogany paneled walls and luxuriant carpeting. "So you start out with something like this?"

"Of course. I've got to have wealth first . . . and power and influence. What good can an *average man* do?"

"Political power?" she guessed.

I nodded.

"And you think you can get it with the flux indicator?"

"I know I can. The fluxometer itself says so."

"But don't you see you can't get it for nothing? You'll have

to pay in some way—with some part of yourself."

I took her hand reassuringly and laughed. "If you stick around—as my secretary, say—you'll be able to see that I keep in line."

She sighed. "I'll stay."

For a while I was impressed with the profits we showed. I even hired investment experts to take care of the legitimate clients we attracted.

But it was inevitable that there should be more robberies. Despite faultless manipulation, return from even the bluest of the blue-chip ventures had its limitation.

So, under the faultless egis of the destiny detector, the other robberies—many of them in distant cities while I was on "business trips"—were executed with unerring simplicity. Of course there were a few killings involved. But they were unavoidable.

During this period, though, there wasn't much time for Sarah. Oh, I saw her occasionally outside the office. But such dates were invariably stiff as a result of the indicator's disturbing fluctuations whenever I consulted it on her.

By now I was never without the fluxometer, even though its persistent reading of minus seven was a matter

of increasing concern. Involuntarily, I had gotten into the habit of referring to it for every move—even to the extent of glancing at the dial before crossing the street.

I should have guessed then that my interest in Sarah was being supplanted by an almost devotional preoccupation with the detector.

One morning, despite assurance from the fluxometer that I was in no danger of detection as a result of the robberies, I was tense when the cab pulled up at the office building.

I watched the needle dive to a spurious minus ten. But even as I puzzled over the cause, I saw Ralph Simmons releasing Sarah's hand at the entrance to the building.

She went in and he turned and saw me. Unobtrusively, I wedged the portfolio under my arm.

"I didn't know you were seeing Sarah," I said, returning his greeting.

"I came to tell her I could get her on at Western."

"Are you there now?"

He nodded. "They thought I'd know something about the apparatus they got from Laverne-Hunter at the auction. I'm dismantling the big generator you and Dr. Laverne

used in building that detector."

I tensed. It was evident Laverne had told him more about the fluxometer than I had realized.

"Oh?" I said tentatively.

"They want to see if I can reconstruct some of the stuff Laverne was working on."

"Now, Simmons," I chided. "You know everything's covered by patents."

"Not everything. I figure some of it was too hot for a patent."

I surveyed him critically, wanting desperately to consult the indicator.

"That detector, for instance," he went on. "It showed whether actions under consideration would bring favorable results, didn't it?"

The movement of traffic was a blur; the voices of people on the sidewalk, a distant hum . . . Evidently, Simmons knew quite a lot about the fluxometer.

"Maurice's last wish," I said solemnly, "was that it be destroyed."

He glanced significantly at the building plaque bearing my name. "And did you destroy it, Dr. Hunter?"

There was a grim suggestion of amusement in his eyes. "By the way, Doctor, there was something odd

about that generator Western bought. The high-tension trunk was shorted against the static lead-off. It must have been the static line that Laverne walked into. He was too careful to come in contact with that other wire."

Stunned, I watched him stride jauntily off.

Sweeping through the reception room, I motioned Sarah into my office.

"You've been seeing Ralph Simmons?"

She drew back. "Any reason why I shouldn't?"

"No—no." I relaxed complacently. "It's just that—well, all the good the detector could do would be defeated if its existence became known."

"I told you I wouldn't tell anyone."

I felt more at ease knowing she wasn't involved in a plot against me.

She was staring abstractedly out the window. "Dad told Ralph a good deal about the detector. He suspects you're using it."

Suddenly she turned. "And he's right to be afraid, Edmund. It's too—dangerous."

I spread my hands. "You're not being fair. At least give me a chance!"

Her eyes were cold, steady. "A chance for what?"

I squirmed under the inquisition. Then, "I'll tell you . . . I'm going to become governor. I'm going to put through a great reform program. There'll be full utilization of resources to sustain a tax-free economy. We're going to make strides in health, welfare, education. We'll have a utopia that will spread to the whole country!"

Not knowing that only the first statement of purpose was true, she was impressed by the high-sounding phrases. Her face brightened slightly.

"All I ask," I went on, "is that you hold back your judgment."

"I want to have faith in those things, Edmund," she said indecisively.

I clasped her shoulders. "Good girl!"

When she left, I turned anxiously to the detector . . . Did Ralph Simmons pose a threat?

The needle only fluttered wildly!

But how could that be? Were there actually *two* persons beyond the cognitive power of the flux indicator—Sarah *and* Ralph?

"Is he trying to hurt me?" I demanded.

Frenzied fluctuation.

But I tried still another question. "Is Simmons only

guessing about the generator?"

Frustrated, I watched the needle swing limply.

I gave up . . . Anyway, even if Ralph knew I had killed LaVerne to get control of the indicator, I apparently had nothing to worry about for the time being. Otherwise the fluxometer would be reflecting the danger.

But I was troubled considerably by the minus ten destinares the needle was registering constantly now. For some reason, the negative bias was still increasing.

That night I checked the circuits and went painstakingly through multiple voltage and capacitance readings with a potentiometer. But there was nothing wrong with the detector.

Despairingly, I twisted the bias control and returned the indicator to zero, as though by that expedient I could strike from my consciousness the existence of the ominous indication.

Governor Walton studied me curiously, seeming not at all like the ruthless politician he was known to be.

"I realize, Dr. Hunter, that you should make an excellent administrator. Your recent achievements in the financial

field are remarkable. But you must realize my ticket was decided long ago. The committee wouldn't hear of a change."

I considered bluntness and the indicator in the portfolio sanctioned that approach.

"You are the committee," I said arrogantly. "You could elect a short-order cook as your lieutenant Governor if you wanted."

He stiffened resentfully. "The door, Dr. Hunter—"

I slapped the bills on his desk. "There's a hundred thousand. There'll be another fifty thousand weekly until the election if you qualify me on your ticket. A week after the inauguration there'll be a final hundred thousand."

That did the trick, as the indicator had assured it would. But I put down another stack of bills. "Here's twenty-five thousand to buy off your candidate for lieutenant governor."

He cleared his throat. "You've got yourself a deal."

But there was no particular sense of accomplishment. Everything was coming off as I had planned—with the help of the fluxometer, of course.

The quickest way into national politics is through an impressive governorship. And the detector had assured me I would become governor when

Walton died a week after the inauguration.

But I tensed as an intriguing thought materialized . . . Walton would die in office. But would I have anything to do with his death?

The needle swung to an affirmative plus thirty.

Walton folded his hands thoughtfully. "Why do you want to be lieutenant governor, Dr. Hunter?"

Play it bluntly again, the indicator coached.

"I'm twenty years younger than you, Governor. You need a political heir."

He leaned back and laughed appreciatively.

Everyone knows the details of that brief campaign—how my venture into politics attracted national attention. What they don't know is that every strategem was calculated, approved and monitored by the detector.

And the fluxometer's judgment was vindicated strikingly when I polled a vote fifteen per cent larger than Walton himself.

Two days after taking office I was still smugly savoring the taste of victory . . . when the flux indicator broke.

I was in the investment firm office at the time, the instrument on my desk.

Apprehensively, I shook it. The pointer slammed back and forth lifelessly. A dreadful pall of foreboding spread over me . . . A thousand perils could be taking shape! And I would have no indication!

Perspiration dappled my forehead as I struggled to open the case. Then I saw the trouble. The flux rectifier transistor was cracked.

Of course I had duplicate parts at home. But could I make it there safely? I hadn't taken a step without the detector in months. And I'd become horrifyingly sensitive to all possible dangers.

I knew that every path a person follows is but one of many possible ones, only a handful of which entails peril. The chances are slim that he will select one of those few. But with the detector seeing every possible course, you are warned of all the dangers you would ordinarily miss.

So, frenziedly imagining a score of pitfalls that were only vague probabilities, I thrust the instrument in my pocket and switched on the intercom.

"No!" I heard Ralph Simmons' anxious voice. "Today! Now!"

"I can't just—leave," Sarah protested.

"Don't you believe me?"

"Oh, Ralph! Of course I do. But—"

There was a protracted silence, then a click and the speaker went dead. She had realized the intercom was on.

I had to know what was going on between them . . . This, then, was a scene I would have to play without the detector.

I stepped into the reception room and Ralph looked up, more calculatingly than surprised.

"She's leaving," he said.

I turned questioningly toward Sarah.

But her stare was coldly appraising.

"I told her you killed her father," Ralph explained.

"Now, Ralph—" I began placatingly.

"Is it true?" she asked.

"Of course!" he shouted before I could answer. "I could have proved it before I took the generator apart. But I didn't suspect then."

"Ralph!" she exclaimed, warning him to be quiet.

"It's all right. The detector's already told him I can't prove it. He wouldn't be standing there if there was any danger—if he didn't know he'll come out on top of anything that happens here."

"Ralph, let's go!" She tugged him to the door.

But he balked. "I'm not giving up, Hunter! I'll—"

I closed the door confidently on his outburst. I had nothing to fear unless he got desperate. After all, who would believe the lieutenant governor had a—destiny detector?

For the first time, I realized the fluxometer could also serve as a bluff against someone who was aware of its power. Ralph, for instance, might have turned on me. But he reasoned the instrument had assured me I could kill him guiltlessly in self-defense.

He was presuming his position to be hopeless. But that was to my advantage. Of course, he didn't know the indicator wouldn't give a reading involving either him or Sarah.

One thing was certain though: Only three persons knew of the detector—and that number now was two too many. I didn't need the omniscient wisdom of the fluxometer to convince me I had to kill Ralph and Sarah—on my own, if not with the help of the indicator.

I suppose it was at that moment I realized I hadn't really loved Sarah at all. I had probably mistaken necessity for affection. I had had to win her over, you see, because she

knew too much about the flux-ometer.

The detector! Remembering abruptly that it was broken, I hurried out of the office and hailed a cab.

My desperate race for home was a nightmare that overshadowed all the other fears I'd ever known.

"Faster!" I urged the driver a hundred times.

Then, as he plowed through traffic, "Slower! For God's sake!"

He barely missed a truck. I bolted erect and tensely scanned the street for possible danger that the flux indicator would otherwise be on guard against.

The driver ran a caution light. Swerving to avoid a pedestrian, he almost collided with another car in cross traffic.

As he stared back, the cab veered for the sidewalk. I lurched up to grab the wheel. But he recovered in time and straightened out.

Later, in the lighter traffic of the residential section, he swore desperately as we started down a hill near home.

"No brakes!" he exclaimed.

We streaked past two traffic lights and he wrenches the wheel to avoid collisions at each intersection.

I was confounded . . . Was there such a thing as luck? Had I ensured myself so much synthetic fortune that now, denied use of the detector, fate was spitefully trying to balance the ledger?

We approached the top of the next hill and I could see there would be enough impetus left to carry us over the crest. I leaped out, managing to stay on my feet until I killed my momentum. And, even as I drew to a halt, I heard the grating sound of the cab's crash.

If I could only get home!

Cautiously, I started out on foot. Perhaps if there were such a thing as vengeful fate, I could confuse it by following an unpredictable path home—by not giving it an opportunity to prepare pitfalls.

In the next block I crossed the street.

A minute later, a lineman atop a utility pole—above the spot where I would have been—shouted a coarse warning as a length of wire slipped from his hand and fell to the pavement, writhing and spattering sparks.

That was the way! Play it cunningly!

I crossed the street again. And almost immediately a truck, skirting the corner recklessly, leaped the curb and

careened across the sidewalk I had just abandoned. It plowed across a lawn and crashed into a tree.

Alternating sidewalks more cautiously and varying my pattern of crossings, I managed to confuse the hosts of misfortune until I finally arrived home.

On the porch, I barely jumped out from under the massive oak door that fell off its hinges as I opened it.

Before descending into the workshop, I threw a flashlight beam into the darkness and picked out the empty cans the janitor had left on the steps. The beam also illuminated the exposed wire I might have touched had I tried to turn on the lights in the dark.

With infinite care, I replaced the broken transistor in the fluxometer. Finally feeling the emotional impact of all that had almost happened, I sat at the workbench shaking uncontrollably.

Then, with a frenzied sense of urgency, I examined every part, tested each connection, used the potentiometer to check out all its circuits.

But in making this inspection, I had to return the bias control to zero. And I was appalled at the intensity of the returning negative background indication . . . *minus*

thirty-three destinares! If it had been a spontaneous indication, it would have denoted serious peril!

But then, perhaps I was getting alarmed for nothing. Maybe this steadily increasing negative reading was but a basic property of the instrument — something Laverne and I hadn't noticed.

The logic of the detector was like the movements of a perfect machine — smooth, flawless. It gathered together all the loose ends with amazing efficiency. Consider this:

Long ago the instrument had approved my schedule of bribe payments to the governor, terminating in a final hundred thousand dollars a week following the inauguration. Much later, the indicator had specified the only time to kill Walton would be a week after the inauguration. It didn't require too much foresight to infer that the proposed payment would serve as a trap.

If I could lure him to my country home for the payoff, he would naturally conceal his movements and create the opportunity for the perfect murder that the fluxometer had assured.

So it was with unquestioning confidence that I answered

his knock at the door . . . with a gun in my hand.

Confounded, he stood staring at the weapon, rain slanting down behind him like silver ribbons against the black night sky.

"What's the meaning of this, Hunter?" he demanded.

I motioned him in. "I'm going to kill you."

"Are you mad? Quit joking. Give me that gun."

I gave it to him—the barrel, at least—across the cheek. Clutching his face, he reeled against the wall.

I glanced at the destiny detector, inconspicuous on the mantel. Still its needle hovered well in the positive range.

"Why Hunter?" Walton asked perplexed.

"So I'll be governor."

"You fool! You can't get away with it. I left a message I'd be here!"

I phrased his obvious bluff into a mental question for the indicator. It registered negatively.

But reassurance was unnecessary. "Even if that were true, I'd simply explain you were here, but left to drive back to town. You're going to take the old highway and drive off the cliff in the rain-storm . . . Turn around."

"I'm no fool. You can't shoot me if you're going to

make it look like an accident."

He lunged.

But I sidestepped and brought the butt of the gun down on his head. I think it fractured his skull, as I had planned.

Careful not to leave any evidence, I drove Walton in his car out the old highway, the destiny detector on my lap.

Simulating the accident was even simpler. With the engine running, I pushed him behind the wheel and released the clutch. I watched the car gather speed down the incline, fail to negotiate the curve and crash through the guard rail and over the cliff.

Then I walked a half mile to the new highway, where I had left one of my own cars parked in a deserted barn the day before.

Another hour or two and I would have no more cause for concern. You see, I had planned to murder Ralph and Sarah on the same night.

Of course, there was no assurance of success, since the fluxometer wouldn't consider questions pertaining to Simmons or the girl. But I had a good plan and I couldn't see how it might fail.

The first step was a telephone call.

"Sarah!" I put a quiver of terrified remorse in my voice when she answered. "This is Edmund. You've got to come out here!"

She was silent for a long while. Then, "What do you want?"

"*I've killed another man!* I've—" I let my voice crack in a rasping sob. "I'm going to give myself up. You were right about the detector and power. But I'm trying to fight it, Sarah!"

"Where are you?" she asked stiffly. But some of the edge was wearing off her aloofness. She was taking the lure.

I added another sob or two. "At my country place. I'm trying to destroy all evidence of the detector before the police come. It's only a matter of time before they trace me."

"Who did you kill?"

"The governor."

She didn't answer.

"Sarah—listen! Get Ralph and come out before the police get here! I need help! I've got to get rid of the detector and everything connected with it—parts, notes, papers."

Unconsciously, I glanced at the fluxometer. Naturally there was no reading on the wisdom of what I was doing. But I wasn't apprehensive. I could plan a perfect crime, even without the thing...

Asking her to bring Simmons and help erase all trace of the detector would remove any suspicion she might have had.

"Sarah?"

"We'll come."

"Then hurry! And I want you and Ralph to agree that no matter what happens we'll never say anything about the indicator."

After she hung up, I sat back, satisfied with the intrigue I had woven and only slightly concerned over the recalcitrant detector whose needle was still swinging uselessly across the dial.

I dismissed all anxiety over my plans and it steadied. Then, absently, I twisted the bias control back to zero. And the pointer dipped to an unvarying forty-three. But, of course, that was just a natural effect of the flux indicator. I'd worry about that later. Anyway, there was no time for concern now. I had to make preparations for disposing of the two bodies and the automobile that would bring them.

After two hours of waiting, though, confidence had given way to uncertainty and impatience and I paced the floor, gun in hand.

Once, in a lull between the rumbling thunder, I thought

I heard their car coming up the road. But when the lightning subsided I could see no glare of headlights.

I was sitting restlessly near the door when I heard the tinkle of breaking glass in the rear of the house, followed by the noise of furniture scuffing the floor in the darkness.

"Who's there?" I shouted.

No answer.

Then there was the sharp sound of a chair falling over and striking the floor.

Desperately, I clutched the detector, hoping to get an indication of danger or safety. But again its needle was roaming aimlessly—as it did only in failing to give an indication on Ralph and the girl.

"Simmons? Sarah?" I called.

"You're half right," came the confident answer from somewhere beyond the hall's darkness. "It's Ralph."

"But—but—"

"No, Hunter. We didn't go for your trap. You see, we weren't too surprised when we got your call."

What did he mean? Where had I slipped up?

"We found out your instrument wouldn't give a valid indication on Sarah and me," he went on. "So it was only logi-

cal that sooner or later you'd try to get us on your own. We weren't going to wait, though. We were going to beat you to it. But your call came first. So it's your party. Enjoying it?"

I squinted into the shadowy hall and caught a glimpse of him half hidden in one of the bedrooms. I fired, missed.

He returned the fire and I leaped back into the living room, realizing I had been exposed in the doorway.

"How did you know I couldn't use the detector against you?" Maybe I could maneuver him into a position of disadvantage.

"I found out yesterday—when I finished the detector I was working on. Naturally, the first thing was to get some indication of what you were doing. But I discovered it wouldn't register on anything connected with you."

I was confounded. "You've got a fluxometer too?"

"Yes. But like yours, it's no good in this case. You might as well put it down, Hunter."

I only gripped it more tightly.

"You see," he went on, "the indicator works as long as it is the single, undisputed manipulator of probabilities. But with a second fluxometer, the probabilities are affected by two mutually exclusive varia-

bles. Naturally, it's impossible for either to validly indicate events over which it has no absolute control."

I saw instantly that he was right! And I hadn't preconceived the fallacy of the instrument because I had never considered the existence of two detectors.

I realized then that an indication on him and Sarah had been impossible because their eventual possession of the second detector made them, and it, a variable factor of the second order.

Too, I was aware now that the steadily mounting negative reading of my detector was in the nature of an attempted warning against the eventual existence of the other instrument.

I was frantic now. Ralph's footsteps were close in the hall. Clutching the useless detector, I sidled toward the light switch. "Why did you come here if you knew it was a trap?"

"Because you were right—all traces of the fluxometer must be destroyed before we tell the police you killed Dr. Laverne. And, without the detector, you won't be able to manipulate the probabilities; we'll be able to prove you did it."

He peered into the room and I fired.

Before he could shoot back, I reached the light switch and plunged the room into darkness. I was at an advantage then. I knew the lay of the furniture.

I crawled behind the sofa, waiting for an opportunity to spot him during a flash of lightning.

Frantically, I shook my flux indicator . . . God! Why wouldn't the needle settle down?

Thunder roared and the glare of lightning flooded the room. I thought I saw him against the wall by the mantel and fired again.

But that only betrayed my location. He shot twice and I scrambled behind a chair next to the buffet.

If I could only get the fluxometer to work! It would tell me when to shoot, where to hide, whether to advance or retreat.

I shook it fiercely, until its luminous needle was only a blur in the darkness. But when I held it still again, the indicator continued to swing listlessly.

Disgusted, I hurled it across the room.

But even as I heard it smash against the wall, I realized my stupidity . . . Now, without

the instrument, the watchdogs of misfortune, lurking on all sides like grim, silent sentries, would close in.

Ralph's gun roared and the slug rammed into my shoulder.

I fired back. But the revolver's cylinder jammed and hot shrapnel peppered my face as the shell exploded in the gun.

Pain erupted in my left eye and I felt blood and the vitreous humor of the eyeball flow out on my cheek.

Lurching back, I stumbled across a footstool near the fireplace and crashed down against the andirons. Agony shot up my arm as the bone snapped somewhere below the elbow.

I reeled into the buffet. The massive piece of furniture shifted as though it were alive and toppled over with me under it, an edge ramming into my side.

Ribs, cracking and splintering, sent tortuous lances shooting through my chest and I coughed spasmodically, tasting the blood that was flowing into my mouth.

The room was suddenly filled with light and I saw Simmons standing by the switch, amazement on his face. He dropped his detector and came over.

Seizing the buffet, he threw all his weight against it. "Laverne was afraid the fluxometer might warp the time-incident flow and keep chance factors from balancing out."

The buffet shifted as he heaved. I squirmed out.

"He was afraid there'd be some kind of violent realignment of the flux force if the warp was suddenly released." Simmons let the massive article drop back down.

There was a rumbling sound and I looked up to see a huge ceiling beam tear loose. I escaped the full weight of the timber, but a protruding nail sliced through my cheek and ear lobe, gouging out teeth and a sliver of jawbone.

Deafening thunder roared and lightning flashed and a section of the roof and ceiling disintegrated.

I was sobbing in agony and fright when Ralph half carried me out through the front door.

But as we started down the steps I slipped from his grip and fell the rest of the way to the ground. When I tried to rise and run away from the burning house, my right leg collapsed under me . . . It was broken above the knee.

There was an explosion and another beam, blazing fiercely, hurtled down from the

black, rain-laced sky and crushed my other leg.

A thousand shards of flying glass pierced my burning clothes and dug into my flesh.

Then, mercifully, unconsciousness came.

Voices.

Unfamiliar: "What's he mumbling about? What kind of a detector?"

Ralph's: "I don't know."

Unfamiliar: "What do you know about that slug in his shoulder?"

Ralph's: "I shot him. He went crazy and pulled a gun. We fought and it went off."

Sarah's: "We came here to see about settlement of the Laverne estate."

I opened my eyes. The rain had stopped and the fire that had razed the rear of the house was out. I lay on a stretcher near an ambulance. The spotlight from a car with the sheriff's insignia on it aided the interns who were working on me. The man listening to Ralph and Sarah's lies was a deputy sheriff.

He saw I was conscious. "You'll be okay, Dr. Hunter. But you're going to have a lot of explaining to do. We came to investigate the fire and found the governor's engraved umbrella on your porch—three hours after he was

found dead in a wrecked car. I don't think the governor would have *forgotten* his umbrella in that kind of a rain."

I realized vaguely that, although the fluxometer had promised no danger of detection in the murder of the governor, that indication hadn't taken into account the possibility that a second variable in the form of Simmons' detector would enter the picture.

A city police car pulled up in the drive and the captain spoke in hushed tones with the deputy, then with the doctor. He came over to me.

"Where's the gun you used to kill the watchman at Citizens' Bank? We know it's yours, Dr. Hunter. Ballistics finally traced it through the characteristics of the slugs. You bought it from West Avenue Pawn Shop the day before the robbery."

The deputy exploded resentfully. "None of that, Captain. I'm keeping him in this county on the other murder charge."

Another car pulled to a halt.

"Not until you clear it through with my district agent," the driver called out the window. "I'm Connaughton of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. We've run through a tracer on some of Dr. Hunter's business trips.

They coincide with every major bank robbery over the past four months."

You know the rest.

Physically, I'm all right again—well, as reasonably as could be expected.

I don't know why, but I keep trying to convince everyone—even in this institution

where no one could possibly understand—that there was such a thing as a destiny detector.

You see, if I ever succeed, I imagine I'd have to stand trial for Laverne's murder, or one of the others.

But even that might be better than the way things are now.

THE END

SPACE QUIZ ANSWERS

1. *400 feet.* (36,000,000 miles)
2. *1,000 feet.* (93,000,000 miles)
3. *Venus.* (7,700 miles for Venus, 7,918 for Earth)
4. *1 mile.* (483,000,000 miles)
5. *9 inches.* (75,060 miles)
6. *4 miles.* (1,783,000,000 miles)
7. *6 miles.* (2,793,000,000 miles)
8. *8 miles.* (3,675,000,000 miles)
9. *47,256 miles.* (4 light years)
10. *Nearly 100,000,* actually 94,000 miles. (8 light years)
11. *880,000,000 miles.* (75,000 light years)
12. *10,000,000,000 miles.* (860,000 light years).



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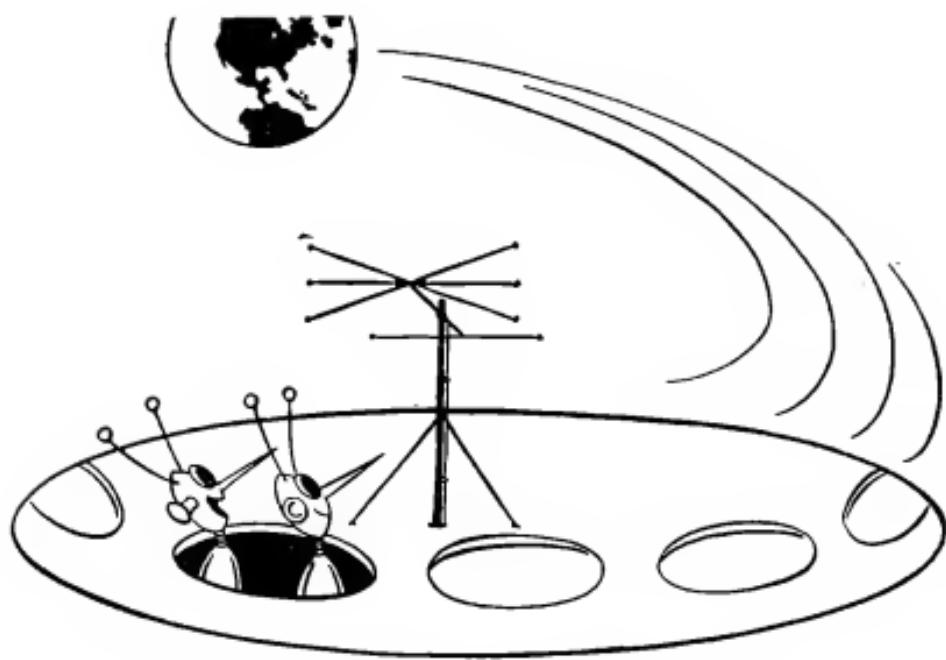
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"It must do something; all earth people have them."

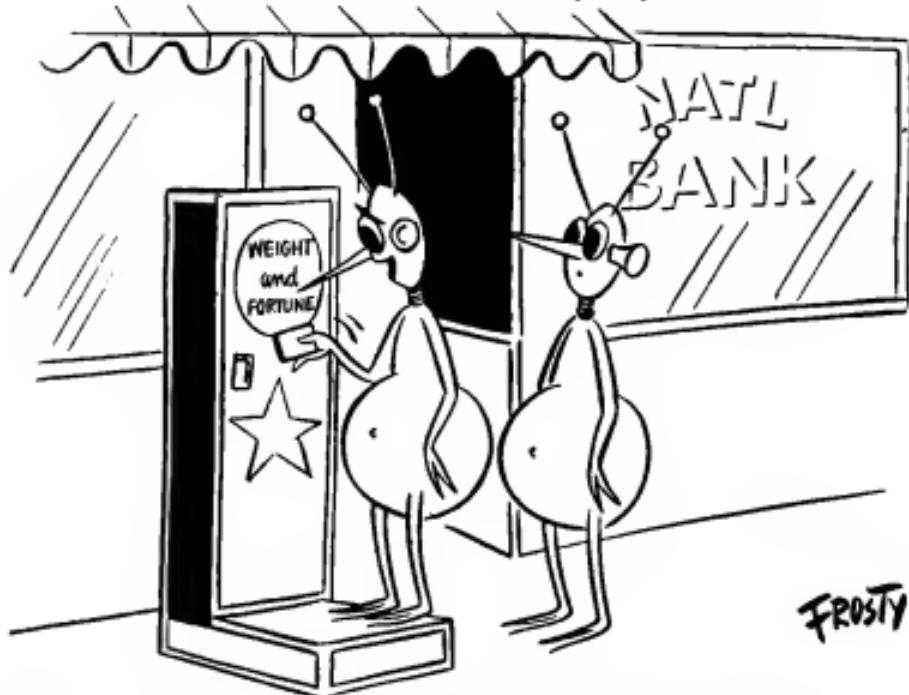
Klein's Basement



"The Galactic wars were nothing like this!"



"It says here that Mars is uninhabited. We'd better rush back and find out where everybody went."





...OR SO YOU SAY

BY THE READERS

Dear Editor:

In *Amazing Stories*, June, Volume 31, No. 6, it stated, "Your caveman ancestors couldn't read."

Sir, my caveman ancestors on my father's side were very intelligent. Believe in it or not, one of them, who lived 50,000 years ago, was a genius. His mental capacity and inventive ability surmounted that of present day Homo Sapiens. This was very good for him, who was a Homo Neanderthalensis or an ape. It is possible he was of a better vintage; Homo Superior. If he did not read it was because he never tried.

The only thing worthy of reading in the issue was "Test Your Space I.Q."

Edward Kurcina
1210 Ingham St.
Pittsburgh 12, Pa.

• *Another very smart thing your father's ancestor did—he married your mother's ancestor.*

Dear Editor:

I am a new science fiction fan, age thirteen. I have been reading old copies of *Amazing* and other s-f magazines printed in the 40's. Now I have started reading the new magazines and I find the stories just as good as ever with one exception. I prefer the old size with the longer novels. The "novels" today would only have been a "short story" then. Are those days gone forever?

Dale Rundles, Jr.
R.R. #1
West Lafayette, Ohio

- The longer ones are available also, Dale. Why not check the ad on the back cover, pick some titles you like, and send the coupon in?

Dear Editor:

Another top hit! The June *Amazing* was excellent. The novel "The Steel Napoleon" was packed with adventure and intrigue. Rest of the stories followed in great style.

Features are always a treat. Especially "Test Your Space I.Q." One can never learn too much.

Your editorial was very interesting. Shall we say more truth than poetry. Despite our high expenses and ever faster living we are in the golden era of Man's history.

W. C. Brandt
Apt. N
1725 Seminary Ave.
Oakland 21, Calif.

- It's getting so our letter column wouldn't be complete without word from W. C.

Dear Ed:

I've been reading s-f a little over a year and for reading entertainment your books are the most, especially at such low prices.

June issue was a superb magazine and I know many of your readers got a big kick out of "Momma Blew A Fuse" and "The Babbit From Bzlfsk." They were finer than fine.

A/3c Robt. Kinney
U.S.A.F.

- The results of our "Babbit" contest will be published in the October issue. Better reserve your copy.

Dear Editor:

Your editorial in the June *Amazing Stories* presents itself to be commented on. You say that we are living in a wonderful age, that we are "lucky" as you put it—not to have been born centuries ago.

Well, this "lucky" age may not be so lucky after all. Consider the fact that we have suffered through two of the worst wars ever to hit mankind. Now, we may have to fight a third World War, worse, no doubt, than the previous two. We are living in the atomic age, but the atomic age may, if man is not wise, bring more hardships and plagues, than any other age has suffered through.

Sure, life was hard a hundred or two hundred years ago, or ten hundred years ago, for that matter, but not as hard as you put it.

In many respects the centuries of the past were much better than this 20th Century.

No matter how gloomy an age seems, you can be sure that there will be those who will dream of jousting in a medieval tournament, or crossing the frontier braving Indian attacks, because they think that that age has something to offer that this one does not.

And they may be right!

Larry Sokol
4131 Lafayette Ave.
Omaha 31, Nebr.

• *They may well be at that, but you've got to admit that Napoleon would probably have given ten years of his life for even a second-hand Chevy.*

Dear Editor:

I am a new reader of *Amazing*, having just switched from anthologies to current magazines, and I must say that I have been pretty much pleased by what goes on between your covers each month. Although I don't feel as though I am yet entitled to throw any brickbats, here is one which you yourself invited by saying that the story "The Edge of the Knife" was open for comment. There was nothing wrong with the story per se, but the caption under the accompanying picture made a point that seemed to be the exact opposite of the one the story was trying to bring out. Whoever wrote the caption should read the story more carefully, although I'd like to suggest that he write one himself on the theme his sentence implies. It might prove interesting.

After the beating you took in your May letter column, I think it only fair to assure you that my friends and I like your stories, cartoons, Space Club, yes, even your ads.

Ginger Rebach
82-46 Lefferts Blvd.
Kew Gardens 15, N.Y.

• *You're just as much entitled to heave a brickbat as the next one Ginger. But thanks for the kind words. Naturally, we like compliments best.*

Dear Editor:

I saw the quiz, "Test Your Space I.Q." in the June *Amazing Stories*. I do not believe that the answers to Nos. 6 and 19 are correct. From what I can remember of Willy Ley's "Rockets, Missles, and Space Ships," the first rocket plane carrying a human pilot was

fired in Germany in the '30s. Also, I believe the director of *Penemunde* was named Dornberger, with Von Braun as second-in-command.

Blake Bacon
P.O. Box 981
Front Royal, Virginia

- We referred your correction to our quizmaster. He's checking but he still claims he's right.

Dear Editor:

Although I have not missed a copy of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic* for 13 years, this is the first time I have written you a letter.

I certainly enjoyed the old pulp editions, but the new digest size is even better.

Virgil Finlay's illustrations are wonderful. I wish that he could do them all. *Amazing Stories* seems to be getting better with every issue.

Raymond H. Ross
Box 154
Elk, California

- At least we're doing our darnedest to make it better with each succeeding issue. And it kind of seems like we're succeeding. Thanks for the vote of confidence.

Dear Ed:

Just wanted to tell you what I thought about the stories in the June issue.

"The Babbit From Bzifsk" was very good. I couldn't find the mistake. What was it? Has Henry Slesar written any other s-f stories?

"Momma Blew A Fuse" wasn't as good as it could have been. The "Johnny Mayhem" adventure was excellent. Have you had other adventures of him in *Amazing* before?

"Test Your Space I.Q." was real good, even though I got only 9 right.

Stephen Sala
Box 1
Osburn, Idaho

- We have some more Mayhem adventures coming up very soon. As for Henry Slesar—did you pick up a copy of "20 Million Miles To Earth"? Henry wrote it and in our opinion, it was one of his best efforts to date.

Dear Editor:

A plea: I have been an s-f fan for 15 years and have been collecting *Amazing* and *Fantastic* all of that time. Recently I had a fire and the collection was destroyed. I would appreciate hearing from anybody who has back issues so that I can start to rebuild my collection.

Ron Boehm
R.R. #1, Box 228
Acampo, Calif.

- *We're pretty sure you'll be flooded with offers, Ron. There are some real traders among our readers.*

Dear Editor:

In some ways I am both elated and mad about your new publication. I am happy because now I can read novels by Fairman, Brown, Wilcox and Arnette without waiting for the next installment. I am disgusted because this new magazine is neither a pulp or a reprint.

I hope that this publication will be better than your others, for your past couple of novels, with the exception of "Cosmic Kill" have been pretty bad. "The Vengeance of Kyvor" was good, but the fact remains that you can pick up any book by Burroughs and read something better than that.

You say good old fiction is hard to come by. True! But good new fiction is even harder to come across. I pray that *Amazing Stories Novels* is a good publication.

Harry Bem
2542 Drake
Chicago, Illinois

- *The verdict on Amazing Stories S-F Novels has been favorable even beyond our original hopes. I'm sure you've read the first issue by now and agree.*

Dear Editor:

I just finished *Amazing* for June and it was short of excellence by a mere fraction of a point. I especially enjoyed Ellison's "The Steel Napoleon" and I hope you get more stories from him before he goes into the Army.

What has happened to your fanzine reviews? I rather liked them, and would rather have them than "The Spectroscope" or any other feature for that matter.

Richard Brown
127 Roberts St.
Pasadena 3, Calif.

● Now we're going after that "mere fraction of a point." One hundred percent excellent is the least we'll settle for. Then we'll head for a hundred and ten percent. Wait a minute! Is that possible?

Dear Editor:

I have been reading your magazine for many years and enjoy every issue. I thought it might interest some of the new s-f fans, as well as the older ones, to learn that I am going to unload some of my rather large collection. I have complete files of several of the leading s-f magazines along with some rare and hard to get numbers.

Walter Jackson
8823—212 St.
Queens Village 27, N.Y.

● We have a customer for you, Mr. Jackson. Just refer to Ron Boehm's letter in this column.

Dear Editor:

I have been reading *Amazing* and other science fiction magazines for at least 20 years. Don't get too scientific on us as most of us read for relaxation.

None of your present authors seem to come up to the old standards such as Lovecraft or Richard Shaver. Shaver's stories about Atlantis are really out of this world, also his stories of subterranean caves that run underneath the earth. When I start a story of his I have to finish it and then I read it over a few times. How about some more stories about Atlantis or Ancient Man or have the Deros got Shaver?

Byron Heywood
Thornton St.
Mendon, Mass.

● That's been our guiding principle for lo, these many years—that people read for relaxation and are not interested in a fictional description of how a spaceship is built. They want to get the thing off the ground and find out what happens to the people inside. This last is what we write about.

Dear Editor:

While I have been an avid fan of s-f for a long time, it was just a few weeks ago that I discovered *Amazing*. Since then I have been buying and trading for all the *Amazings* I could get. The first story I ever read in an *Amazing* was "Professor Mainbocher's Planet" in a back issue. It really left me with a sense of wonder which is hard

to come by in most modern s-f. I enjoy your magazine immensely. It's the best you can buy at the newsstands today or any day.

Wayne MacVey
Santa Monica
California

Dear Ed:

"The Edge of the Knife" in the May issue was a good story in my opinion, but I can't see why it was "too hot to handle."

You have the best magazine in the s-f field.

My vote is for The Space Club and "Or So You Say," plus more cartoons.

Allan Kaufman
9 W. Harrison St.
Chicago 5, Illinois

• *The features you favor will continue, Mr. Kaufman. They've been enthusiastically received.*

Dear Editor:

I am one of a number who think science fiction is getting too scientific. I am always longing for action and constantly in search for old Burroughs and *Amazing Stories*. When I saw the June issue of your magazine I had few gripes. The stories were terrific! I especially liked "The Steel Napoleon" and "No Room in Heaven." Harlan Ellison is a great writer. Snag him for more.

The Space Club is a good idea, keep it up. Valigursky is good, but you might get someone else to do your covers once in a while. Your interior illos could be improved too.

Bill Hauptman
3008 Avenue L.
Wichita Falls, Texas

• *Inside tip: We have a Virgil Finlay cover in the house that's our idea of the best thing Virgil's done in that line. Wait until you see it!*

Amazing But True . . .

A Long Time On The Job

Mrs. Carrie Hysler of New York attended Sunday school for over 2200 Sundays without missing once.

James Wesley Rearden of Graniteville, S. C., has held several jobs in his lifetime but always worked for the same firm. In 1954 Rearden, then 93, completed 82 years with his company.

Albert Grigg served as mayor of Bruce Mines, Ontario for 34 consecutive years before anyone was nominated to oppose him.



Reeve Stan Darling of Burks Falls, Ontario was elected to office eleven consecutive terms by acclamation without his name appearing once on an election ballot.

Robert Shelton of Hamden, Conn., worked 78 years for the same hardware firm.

When he retired in 1955 William F. Buerkle of Elizabeth, N. J., had been working for the same manufacturing firm for 70 years and eleven months.

Charlie Browne was doorkeeper at the British Embassy in Washington for 67 years and served under 16 ambassadors. In 1948 he was presented with the King's Medal for "service in the cause of freedom."



At the age of 86 Henry Thompson was awarded the British Empire Medal for his over 60 years' service to the post office. Henry is the oldest telegram boy in Britain.

J. H. Greenshields operated the same grocery store in Toronto for 67 years until he died at the age of 91.

Edward Milward was elected mayor of Hastings, England, every other term for 52 years (1750-1802). His son was elected mayor every other term for 39 years (1786-1825).

John D. Kelly, who depicted Canadian history in calendar art, was employed by the same firm for 70 years. He retired in 1955 at the age of 93.

—continued from Back Cover



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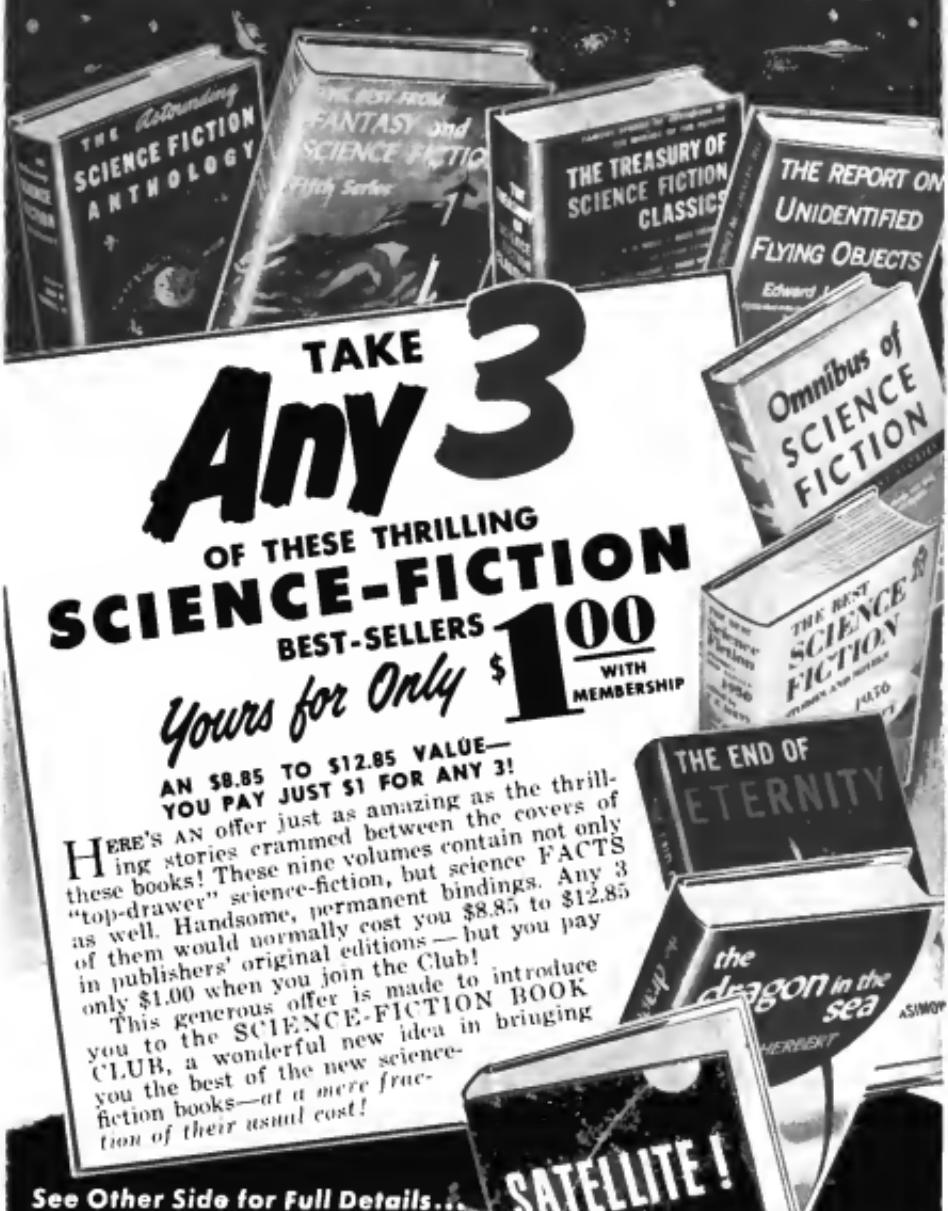
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Another scan
by
cape1736

